
THE
WITCHER®
WILD III HUNT
ART
BOOK

THE WITCHER® WILD HUNT

ARTBOOK

We would like to give you something special,
something that will endure.

CD PROJEKT RED

2015

THIS ARTBOOK CONTAINS SPOILERS THAT MAY INFLUENCE YOUR GAMING EXPERIENCE. WE SUGGEST READING IT AFTER FINISHING THE GAME.





PROLOGUE

Introduction

When I walk the halls of our studio I see amazing people everywhere I look. I see engineers, painters, musicians, writers, doctors, philosophers and code wizards. I see explorers and crafters, all trying to master both the grit and polish of their trade and grand, sweeping ideas. We are dreamers, and what we give you with *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* is our dream. It's the idea of presenting you a story encapsulated within a living, breathing world that just begs to be explored. A story that will stay with you, a story that will resonate and leave a mark. We give you the sum of us and our experiences both as game developers and as people; it's our sweat, our tears, and the fruit of countless hours spent creating what we hope to be the game you'll remember as the next step in open world role-playing games. We hope you'll love the adventure of Geralt of Rivia as much as we loved creating it. In the end, you are the reason we do all this, and your support is what makes it all possible

That is why, on behalf of all the people involved in creating the game and responsible for its shape, sound and feel; on behalf of everyone at CD PROJEKT RED and other places (you know who you are), I would like to convey a sincere and heartfelt thank you.

KONRAD TOMASZKIEWICZ
Game Director

‘Because the world is unimaginably vast, Ciri.’
‘I know. I’ve seen a map...’
‘You couldn’t have. No one has drawn such a map yet, and I doubt that anyone will anytime soon.’

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *BLOOD OF ELVES*

The map shown here is an artistic interpretation of the world, not a cartographic tracing of it. It shows the part of the Continent in which this installment of the game takes place, highlighting locations that play a key role in the story: war-torn Velen, the Free City of Novigrad, the Skellige Isles, and even far-off Kaer Morhen, the witchers’ keep, and Vizima, the capital of Temeria.





The Morhen Eye
The Morhen Spike
Kaer Morhen
Novigrad
Gustfields
Vegelbud Estate
Carsten
Grassy Knoll
Oxenfurt
Hanged Man's Tree
Grayrocks
Mudplough
The Simpa
The Descent
Heatherton
Midcopse
Crow's Perch
Crookback Bog
Nilfgaardian Garrison
Spitfire Bluff
Bald Mountain
Fyke Isle
Vizima
The Mire
Nilfgaardian Camp
White Orchard



The game begins near a small Temerian village, in surroundings which at first glance seem almost idyllic. Clear skies abound and the orchards' trees are bursting with white flowers. It takes a moment to notice the tell-tale signs of war: collapsed roofs, turned-over carts littering the roadside, and abandoned possessions strewn about neglected farmyards. This juxtaposition of a warm, sunny spring and a landscape rife with destruction and conflict lends color and credence to the game's atmosphere. In this land, as is often the case in reality, war continues to upend human lives no matter the weather or the time of year.









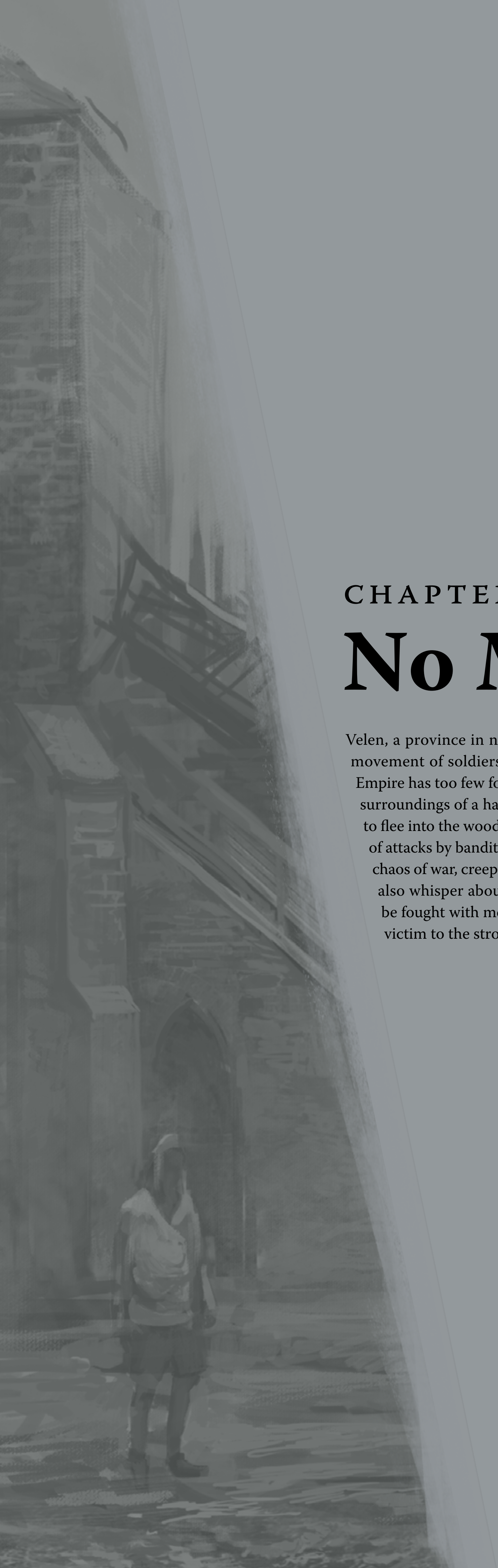
The crumbling castle ruins visible in this illustration constitute one of the locations Geralt may visit in the game's prologue. It is here that the Nilfgaardians have made their temporary camp, a base of power meant to ensure imperial control over the surrounding lands.





During the game's prologue Geralt travels to Vizima, the capital of the Kingdom of Temeria, which is currently occupied by Nilfgaardian forces. King Foltest's former palace now serves as the occupiers' temporary administrative headquarters. Here Emperor Emhyr var Emreis manages his newly-conquered territories and plans the next move of his military campaign.





CHAPTER I

No Man’s Land

Velen, a province in northeastern Temeria, is currently a no man’s land ravaged by the ongoing movement of soldiers across its terrain. Though nominally controlled by the Nilfgaardians, the Empire has too few forces and too thin of supply lines to extend its rule further than the immediate surroundings of a handful of fortified camps. Many inhabitants of Velen have been killed or forced to flee into the woods, while those that remain eke out a meager existence under the constant threat of attacks by bandits, marauders, or monsters. These foul creatures, emboldened by the turmoil and chaos of war, creep ever closer to human settlements in search of easy prey. Many of Velen’s peasants also whisper about a mysterious and evil power that has awoken in the swamps, one that cannot be fought with mere steel. The Velen of this time is a lawless and brutal land, in which the weak fall victim to the strong and the ruthless.



'[...] they passed former hamlets and villages, the only remnants of which were black squares of scorched earth and the sharp stench of burned matter soaked by rain. Murders of crows feasting on corpses took to the air as they went by.'

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *BAPTISM OF FIRE*







In our design of Velen we tried our best to convey the way war has ravaged the region, further complementing that character with an accompanying dark color palette. Abandoned, crumbling homes cluster in eerily-empty villages. Stunted and deformed branches thrust out from barren trees against the backdrop of a somber gray sky. From some of these branches corpses hang—executed prisoners of war or victims of marauding groups of raiders. When darkness creeps over Velen, the atmosphere becomes even more unreal and grim—lit by a pale moon, the landscape looks like something straight out of a horror story.

These lands are part of Temeria, and so we took painstaking care to endow them with the same Slavic character given to this area in the first game in the series. The look of the built environment—its villages and fortifications—is modeled on medieval buildings as described in written sources, illustrations, etchings, and archeological excavations. Professional historical treatises on architecture in central and eastern Europe were a key reference for our designers and artists during this process.

Steep roofs covered in straw thatch top wooden huts and farmyard buildings. To protect against the damp, some homes in wetland areas are raised on low stilts.



During Geralt's travels through No Man's Land he passes through a small village, Heatherton, which was attacked by the Wild Hunt shortly before his arrival. A hard frost, sheets of ice, and unseasonable cold often follow in the Hunt's wake and provide tell-tale signs of its recent presence. The illustrations here show various concepts drawn up while imagining a location transformed by such a phenomenon.

Post-Hunt Heatherton was supposed to look like a place struck by a freak weather anomaly or a minor magical catastrophe. While early autumn weather reigns in the rest of Velen, here snow has fallen alarmingly early. The frozen mud of the farmyards, the frost-covered walls of the huts, and the long icicles hanging from the edges of the roofs stand as clear proof (to those who know how to look) of who is responsible for these happenings.











Crow's Perch plays a key part in events taking place in No Man's Land. This castle was once home to a minor Temerian lord named Vserad. When he fled the approaching Nilfgaardian forces his castle was taken over by the land's new ruler, a self-styled baron and collaborator with the Nilfgaardians named Phillip Strenger, who now claims the dilapidated wooden structure as his home.

The fortifications of Crow's Perch are mostly wooden and clearly have suffered a fair amount of damage, whether during the war or, just as likely, as a result of the capricious and thoughtless actions of some of its new residents. The castle's courtyard is in truth no more than a collection of larger and smaller mud puddles crisscrossed by makeshift causeways and footbridges thrown together from whatever planks happened to be at hand. The castle buildings are also in less than prime condition, as witnessed by the patchy and sometimes rotten thatch on their roofs. The castle's interior, the baron's chambers in particular, presents itself somewhat better, though it too has surely seen better days.









We were at pains to ensure Crow's Perch melded well with Velen's overall atmosphere. The castle is a tough place inhabited by equally tough and dangerous men; it is in truth now not much more than a bandits' enclave. Mess and sloth rule the day here. Holes pock the walls and roofs, here and there a tool or piece of farm equipment lies neglected and discarded, and carelessly dumped wood forms sloppy piles, lending the place an overall feeling of disorder.









A downtrodden village somewhere deep in the swamps of Velen acts as the center for worship of the Ladies of the Wood—the mysterious beings who reign over this part of the province. When we set about creating this strange sanctuary, we sought to convey an unsettling and slightly unreal atmosphere. A wall inside one of a cluster of seemingly ordinary huts was transformed into a sort of shrine. Lit by a thousand flickering candles and adorned with skulls both animal and human, the shrine comes across as bizarre and somewhat disturbing. Its centerpiece is a tapestry woven of human hair and depicting three beautiful women. This is the villagers' point of contact with the revered and feared queens of the swamp.





'The cult of the goddess Melitele is one of the oldest, and, in its time, one of the most widespread religions on the Continent, with origins dating back to the forgotten times before the coming of men.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *"THE VOICE OF REASON," IN THE LAST WISH*



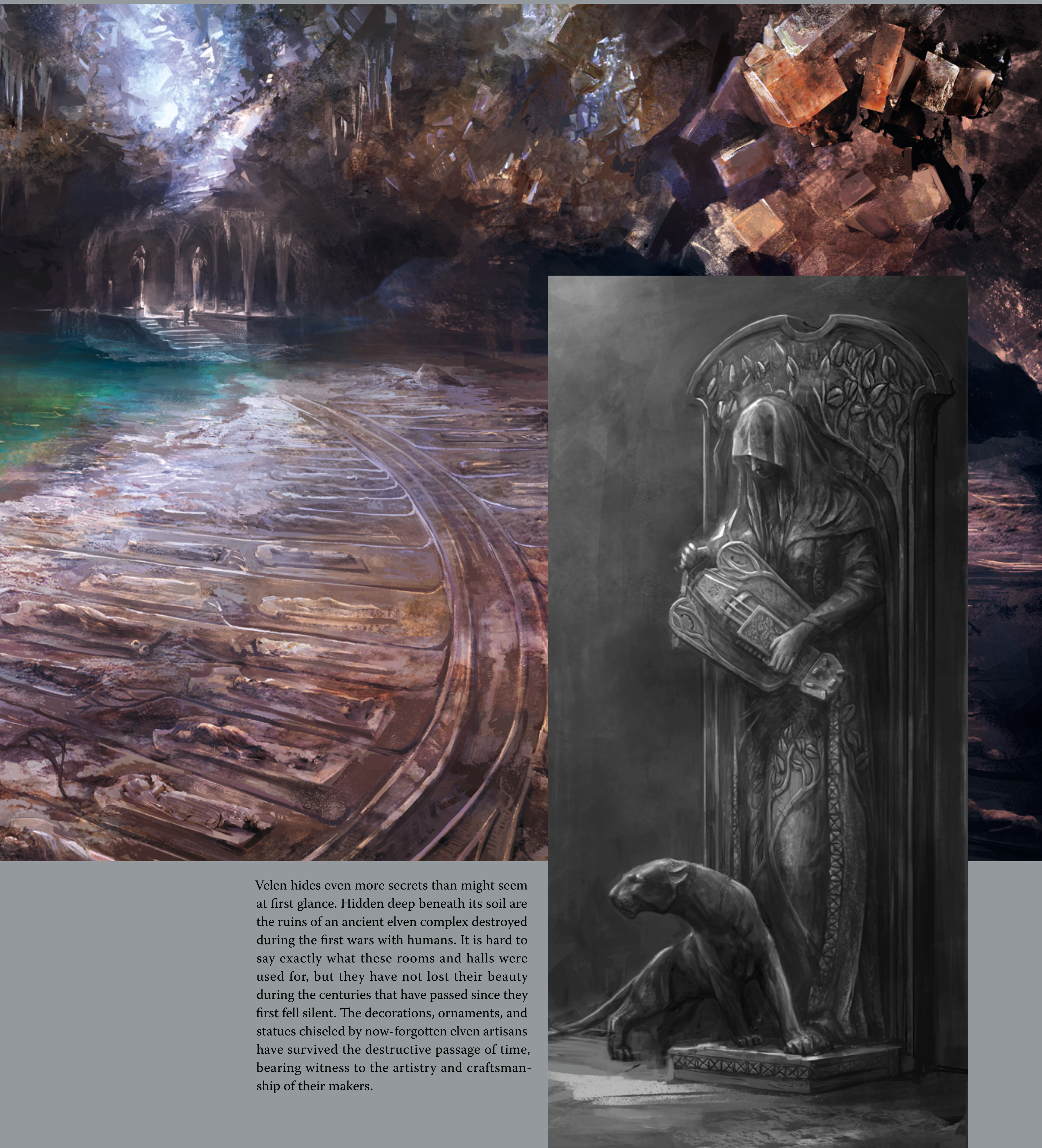


Shrines to Melitele, the goddess of harvest, hearth, and fertility, are a frequently encountered element of the Temerian countryside. Simple statues carved of wood depict the goddess in one of three forms: Mother, Virgin, or Crone. Around these altars local peasants place small thanksgiving offerings of food and drink, and light modest votive candles and lamps. Meanwhile, in Velen another religion has taken root, one which calls for prayers to be addressed to the Ladies of the Wood. This cult's shrines show evidence of syncretism between the faiths: Melitele the Crone has become one of the Ladies, an old woman with sagging breasts and an open mouth full of crooked teeth. These statues are often stained with blood, both the caked residue of past sacrifices and the still-warm traces of new ones.

Both religions are very old, dating back almost to the time of the first men, and so in designing these shrines we tried to convey a somewhat archaic look. The rough-hewn wooden carvings recall ancient Slavic depictions of the gods.







Velen hides even more secrets than might seem at first glance. Hidden deep beneath its soil are the ruins of an ancient elven complex destroyed during the first wars with humans. It is hard to say exactly what these rooms and halls were used for, but they have not lost their beauty during the centuries that have passed since they first fell silent. The decorations, ornaments, and statues chiseled by now-forgotten elven artisans have survived the destructive passage of time, bearing witness to the artistry and craftsmanship of their makers.





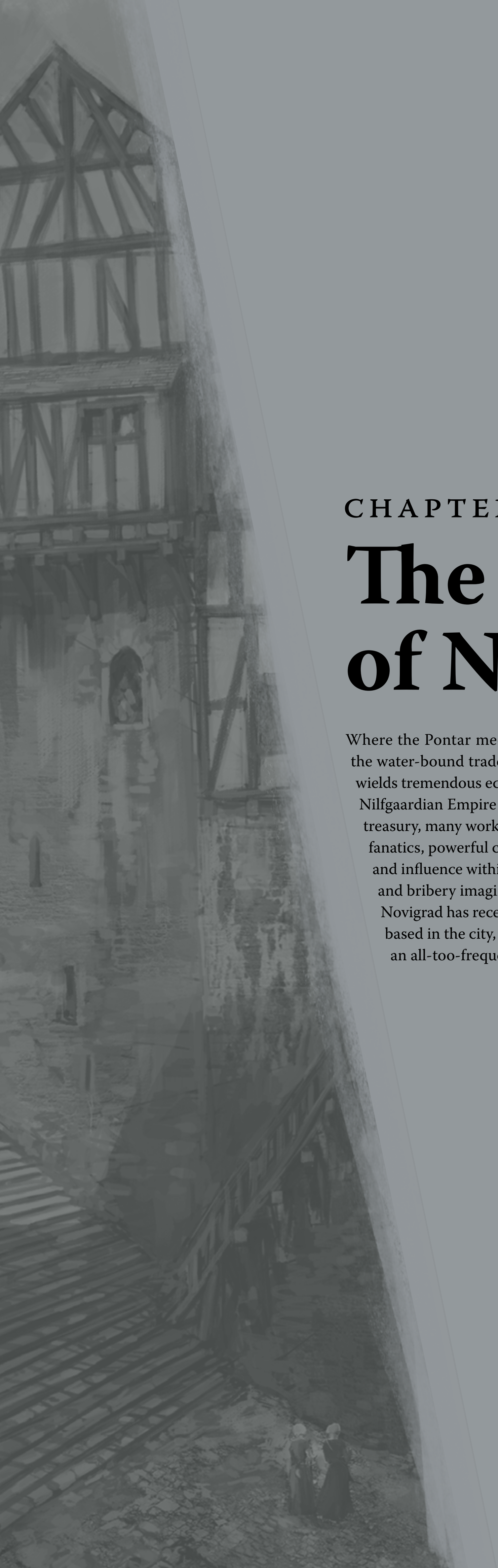




Looming over Fyke Isle, a small island on Lake Wyndamer in Velen, are the ruins of a tower. Even though the sweeping scenery makes for a charming sight during the day, not many dare stay near the lake after dark, and venturing onto the isle itself is unheard of. The tower, it is said, is cursed or haunted, or possibly both. They say a mysterious mage had his laboratory here, and the local magnate, Vserad, sought shelter with him when he heard of the Nilfgaardians' approach. To this day, nearby residents refuse to speak of the horrific events that took place within this building's walls.

The tale of Vserad is based on the early medieval Polish legend about a ruler named Popiel.





CHAPTER II

The Free City of Novigrad

Where the Pontar meets the sea, there lies Novigrad, the metropolis of the North. Enriched by the water-bound trade passing through its harbors and straddling a key military juncture, the city wields tremendous economic and political influence, making it a force the Northern Realms and the Nilfgaardian Empire alike must reckon with. Whoever controls the Free City, with access to its full treasury, many workshops, and mighty fleet, holds in his hands the key to the North. Spies, religious fanatics, powerful criminal organizations, and trade guilds alike thus all wage brutal wars for power and influence within its walls, calling on every form of conspiracy, intrigue, assassination, blackmail, and bribery imaginable.

Novigrad has recently become even more turbulent than usual. The Church of the Eternal Fire, a sect based in the city, has turned fanatic and incited a wave of witch hunts that have made burning pyres an all-too-frequent sight on the city's streets.

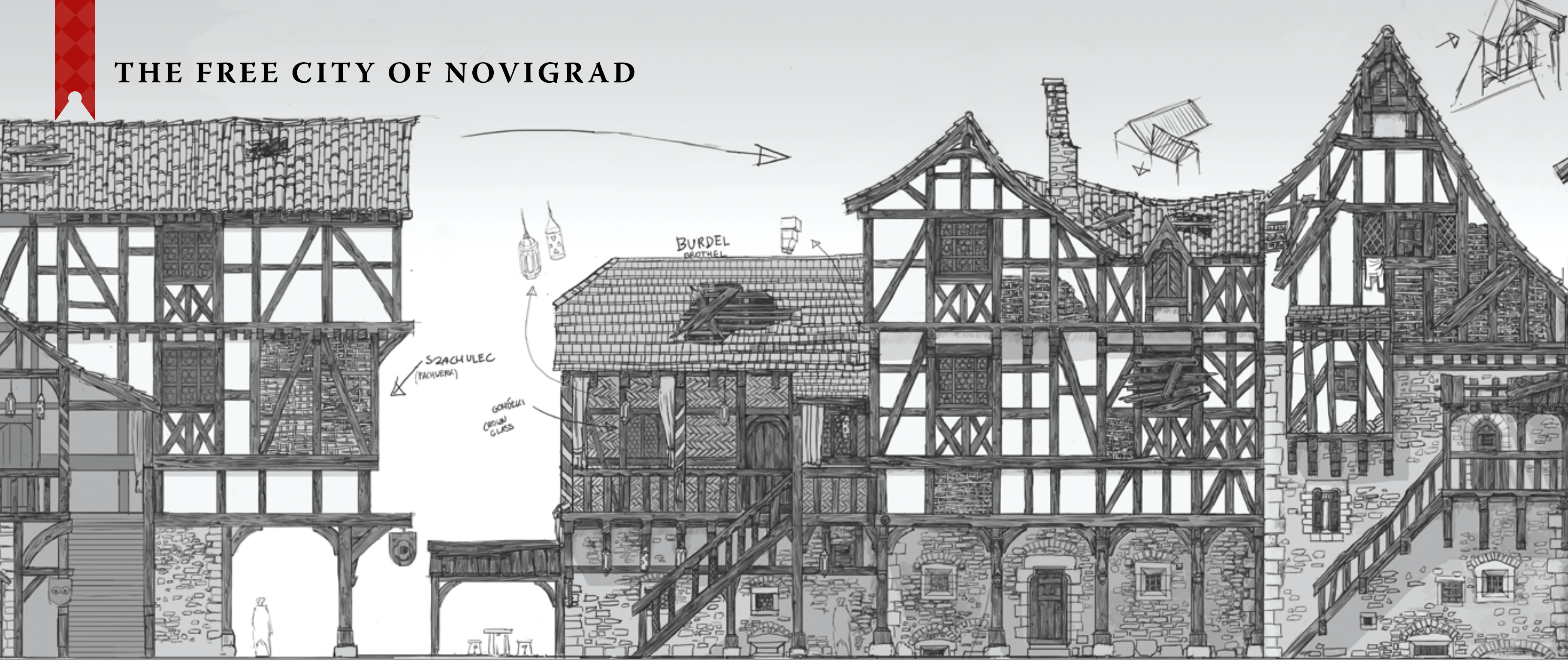






'I'm telling you, Geralt, Novigrad is the capital of the world. Almost thirty thousand inhabitants—and that's not even counting travelers! It boggles the mind!'

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *"ETERNAL FIRE," IN THE SWORD OF DESTINY*


SZACHULEC
(FACHWERK)
BURDEL
BROTHEL
CROWN
GLASS







While creating Novigrad's look we were constantly looking for opportunities to convey the atmosphere of a colorful, bustling port city. The character of this location and its surroundings was meant to be diametrically opposed to the doom and gloom and ramshackle wooden buildings of Velen.

The Free City's architecture is inspired by the trade settlements of northern Europe. Most buildings are made of brick, streets are paved, and most roofs (outside of the poor district, that is) are covered in tile rather than thatch. Since real estate taxes in such cities were often based off street frontage, most townhouses are narrow and add to their living space with a second story that juts out over the street. Only the richest inhabitants—merchants, bankers, and aristocrats—can afford more expansive residences.

Novigrad's color palette also differs from what players will become familiar with in No Man's Land. The city dwellers dress in colorful (at times even garish) clothing, and temples and administrative buildings are decorated with bright pennants and drapery adorned with religious symbols or the city emblem. There's a reason why Northerners claim with pride that Novigrad is the capital of the world.







Novigrad's location at the mouth of the Pontar is a key source of its influence and power. The river constitutes a natural trade route and goods traveling along it are transferred in Novigrad from river barges to seafaring vessels bound for such far-off ports as Kovir, Pont Vanis, or Baccala. Dozens of sketches and drawings were made as the starting point for the creation of the port district of the city. We wanted it to look as realistic as possible, so that when wandering through this district one would truly feel the atmosphere of a lively, well-to-do medieval port. With this in mind we drafted concepts showing stone piers, transport canals, warehouses, and cranes for the loading and unloading of all sorts of cargo onto the ships anchored in the harbor.



'[…] gulls squawked merrily above the masts and a familiar, down-to-earth stench filled the air: wet wood, pitch, seawater, and all three fundamental varieties of fish: fresh, not fresh, and fried.'

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *THE LADY OF THE LAKE*



'[...] here the Eternal Fire, burning in nineteen temples, protects the city with its might.'

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *"ETERNAL FIRE," IN THE SWORD OF DESTINY*





We naturally could not design Novigrad without including the temple of the Eternal Fire, the central place of worship for the city's dominant religion. The books do not provide us with a description of this building, so we had to develop its appearance from scratch.

The black-and-white sketch shows one of the earliest designs for this edifice from the preliminary planning stages of development. We can see it in color in the larger illustration: the structure is stately and broad, with large iron basins in front of the entrance that burn day and night with holy fire. Gold flames can also be seen decorating the building's facade.





The city's public bathhouse plays an important social role in addition to its hygienic functions. This is a place where city dwellers come to relax, merchants come to discuss investments, and the heads of the criminal underworld come to plan their murky dealings.

Stone interiors, columns, arched vaults, tanks with warm and cold water—all these elements drew initial inspiration from the classical thermae of ancient Rome. Our artists then tried to endow them with a unique look that would fit into the realities of the world we had created.









The archway above the entrance to the bath-house is decorated with a masterfully executed and brightly colored fresco.







Setting portions of the game in a big city was a fantastic opportunity to return to the roots of the genre and use one of its classic elements: sewers. As one of the largest cities on the Continent, Novigrad naturally has a vast network of sewers and storm drains gathering waste and water from houses, streets, and gutters and dumping it into the river. The entire underground complex of brick tunnels and drain pipes was built on the ruins of an ancient elven city. While wandering the sewers of Novigrad, one can still happen across the occasional fragment of an ancient hallway or chamber built by the Aen Seidhe. This portion of the Free City also has its own native denizens. Several species of monster have adapted to life in these conditions, making the city sewers a truly dangerous place.





One of the quests in the game takes place at a masquerade ball organized by a wealthy Novigrad family, meaning we had to design several dozen unique masks for the attendees to wear. This task let our artists give free rein to their imaginations, the results of which can be seen in the designs presented in the above illustration. Some are inspired by classic masquerade attire dating back to Renaissance Venice, while others draw on animals, characters, or monsters present in the witcher's world for inspiration. In addition to the White Wolf himself, the attentive observer will spy nekkers, chorts, and even a kayran, the river monster that appeared in the second installment of the series.

The buffet tables were covered with elaborate food stacked atop even more elaborate tableware and set among elaborate floral compositions and elaborate ice carvings. Upon closer inspection, Geralt concluded the display contained decidedly more elaborations than edibles.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI,
THE TIME OF CONTEMPT







Novigrad is also famous for its diverse entertainments. Occupying a special place in the city dwellers' hearts is the Passiflora—an opulent and exclusive house of carnal pleasures. The illustrations presented here show early concept art for this brothel and its interior decoration.

The Passiflora stands in sharp distinction to the townhouses that are its nearest neighbors. It occupies its own small square, part of which is covered with flower beds and small pools of water. In a city as large as Novigrad, the establishment's real estate alone is worth a small fortune. As the law requires, the building's windows are lit in red, clearly informing passers-by of its function.

The elegantly furnished interiors have a slightly exotic character. The Passiflora is clearly no house of simple pleasures for simple clientele. Spending an afternoon in its ladies' company costs a hefty sum that few can afford.

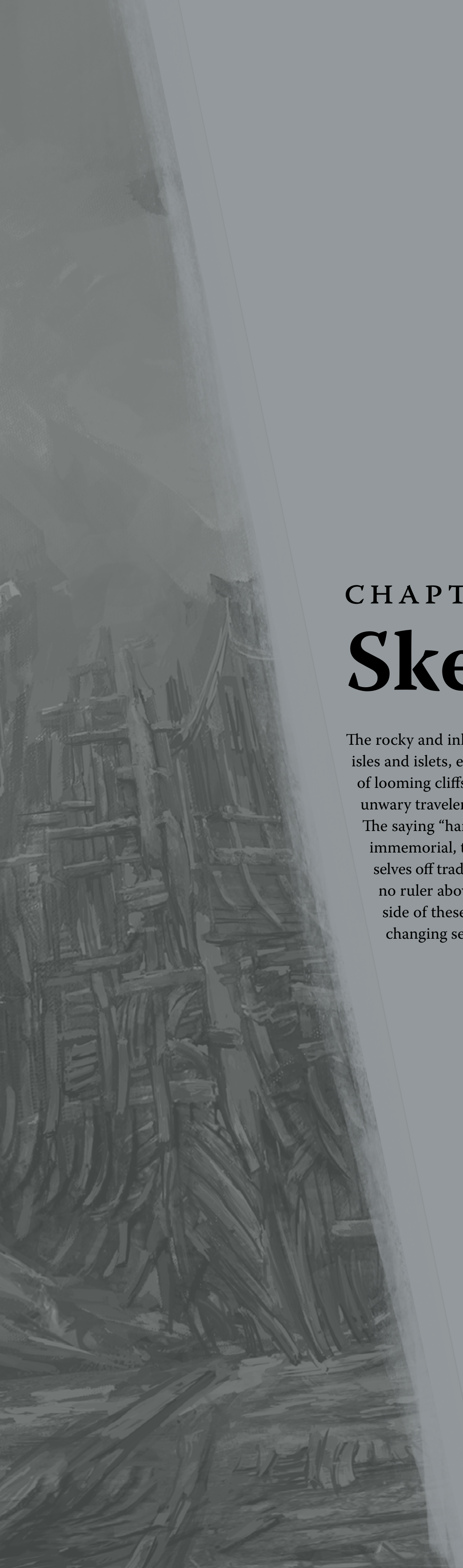


Placards are hung on walls and notice posts all throughout Novigrad. Most of them advertise places with services on offer—everything from theaters, public baths, and laundries to abodes of ill repute. The three placards shown here advertise a locale offering pleasures of the flesh.









CHAPTER III

Skellige

The rocky and inhospitable Skellige archipelago is made up of six larger and several dozen smaller isles and islets, each buffeted by the cold gales and pounding waves of the Great Sea. This is a land of looming cliffs, brisk streams, and dark pine forests full of dangers just waiting to pounce on the unwary traveler.

The saying "harsh lands, rugged people" describes the inhabitants of Skellige perfectly. From time immemorial, these islands have been home to a proud race of brave seafaring folk sustaining themselves off trade and plunder. Divided into independent (and often feuding) clans, Skelligers recognize no ruler above their clan jarls and a king chosen by themselves during ceremonial gatherings. Outside of these raucous events, life in the isles continues at a calm, steady pace, its rhythm set by the changing seasons of the year and the comings and goings of raiding parties.





The western wind slammed the surf against the shore with a dull roar, sending plumes of froth shooting up at regular intervals from the clefts between the rocks.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI,
THE TOWER OF THE SWALLOW



Skellige looks and feels drastically different from Velen or Novigrad. This is a wild, uncultivated land mostly untouched by human presence. We took as a starting point the depiction in the books of the Skellige Isles as a place similar to rocky coastal areas of northern Europe: the Scandinavian fjords, Scotland, Iceland, and the Orkney and Shetland Islands. While creating the concept sketches and drawings on the basis of which these locations would later be modeled, our artists drew inspiration from these regions' geography, flora and fauna, and medieval architecture.

The Skellige Isles also differ from the mainland in terms of the colors used. Here the warm browns and dun greens of No Man's Land, and the red bricks and sunny yellows of Novigrad, give way to cool sea blues and rocky gray cliffs, accented here and there with a pocket of dark green woods or the white of snow and sea foam. These colors fit the overall inhospitable mood of the islands perfectly.





One of the most impressive locations in Skellige is the ancient castle of Kaer Trolde. This unconquerable fortress, carved almost entirely out of a rocky cliff on the isle of Ard Skellig, is home to the powerful clan of Crach an Craite. From atop its high walls one can enjoy a sweeping view of the wooden village tucked against its base and the longships anchored near its port, while the rest of the archipelago stretches off into the horizon.

Shown here is the tunnel that constitutes the only entrance into the castle. It has been carved through the mountain up to a stone bridge connecting two sheer rock walls. On the other end of this stone arch lies the gate leading to the fortress interior.







Inside Kaer Trolde lie spacious stone chambers and banquet halls that look somewhat dark and foreboding in the dim light of candles and torches. In keeping with local custom, the walls are decorated with weapons, shields, and embroidered tapestries depicting fantastic animals, monsters, and heroic deeds.









A tapestry in the Kaer Trolde throne room depicts warriors battling the Ice Giant. Its style makes reference to an actual 11th century artifact, the Bayeux Tapestry, which shows William the Conqueror's successful battles for control over England.

SKELLIGE

The architecture of Skellige differs drastically from the wooden huts of Velen and the brick townhouses of Novigrad. Stone, a resource the isles have in abundance, is an omnipresent element in Skellige buildings. Even the poorest Skellige freeholders build their humble houses out of stone, though their facades are often wooden and adorned with bas-relief carvings of animals or mythic beasts.

We tried to make Skellige villages look as realistic and functional as possible. Shown here is part of the design for the village that sits at the base of Kaer Trolde. Daily life in the village is marked by calm and relative order. Huts are scattered along a wide, partially paved road. The stately building housing the inn constitutes one of the most important landmarks in town. A storage tank gathers water from mountain streams and empties it into a pool used for watering horses. Completing the picture are cords of fire wood, farmyard tools, and scaffolds covered with fish set out to dry.





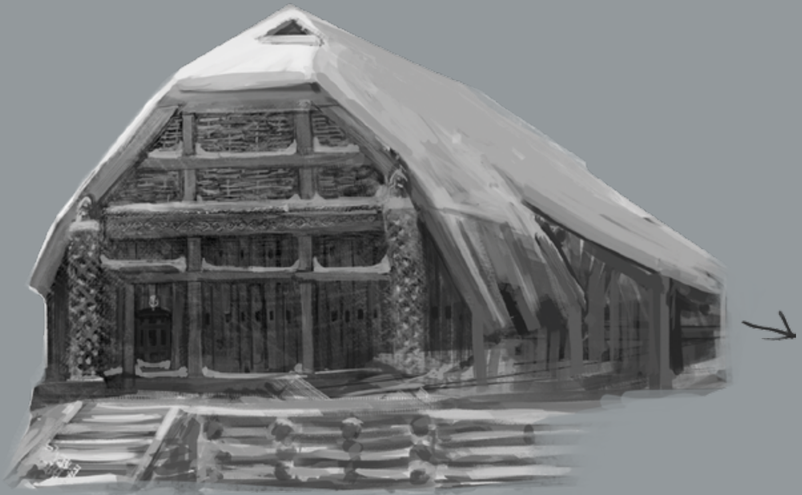








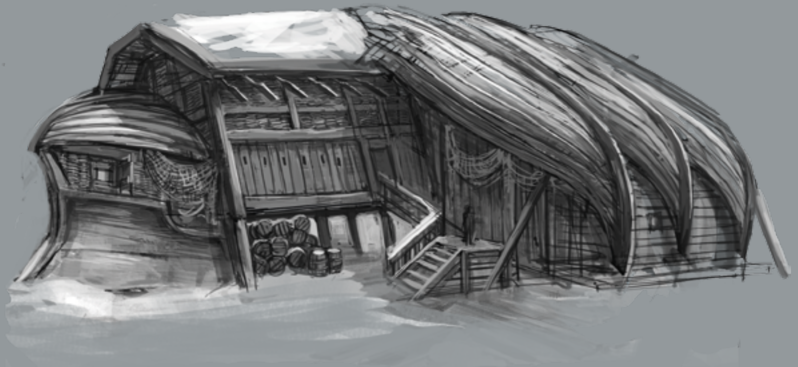


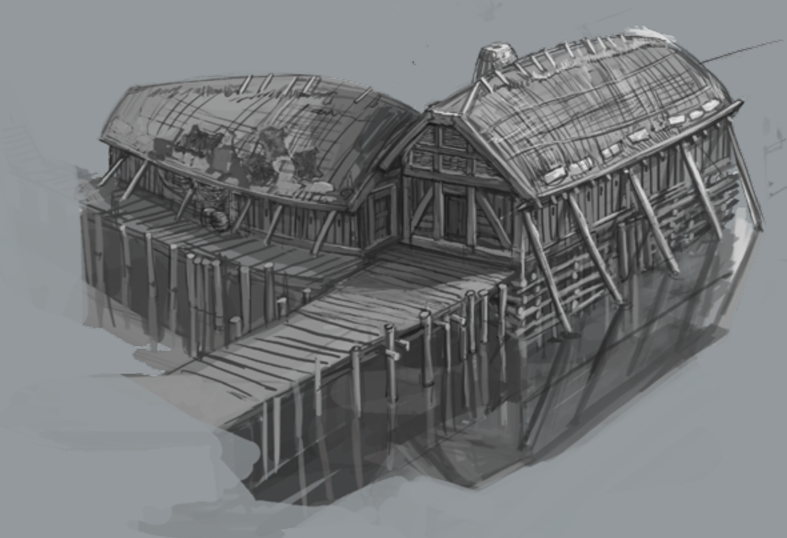


Skellige houses are built to withstand the isles' harsh climate. Large families (often with more than a dozen members) dwell in rectangular huts that can be up to several dozen yards long. Turf or shingles cover their roofs, providing effective insulation against the cold of autumn and winter. Steep roofs reinforced with thick support beams protect the buildings from piles of snow that would crush structures with gentler roofs or less robust construction.

The hearth is a core element of each house's main chamber, the focal point around which daily life ebbs and flows. Walls are often decorated with hunting trophies, hand-woven tapestries, and weapons of all kinds.













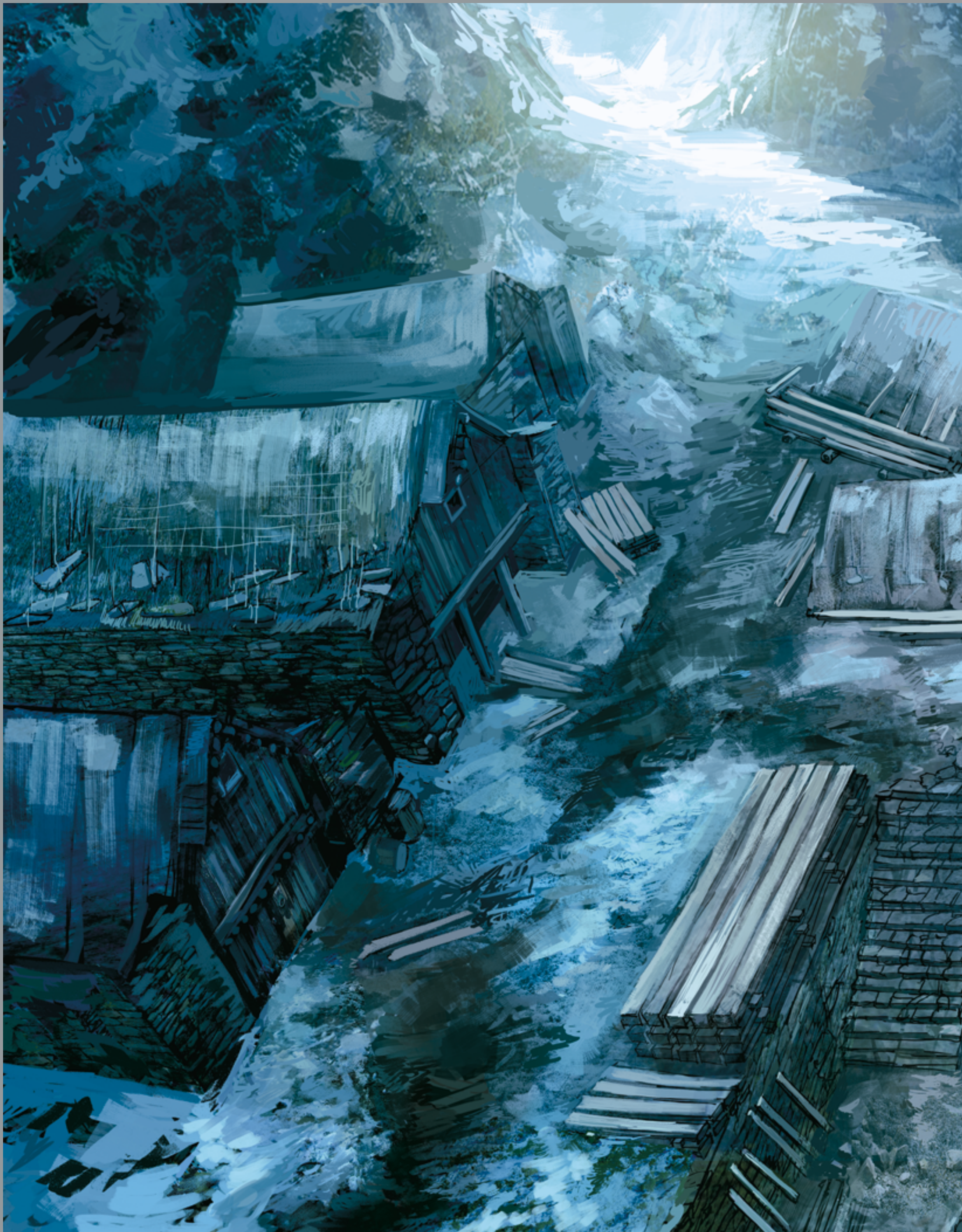








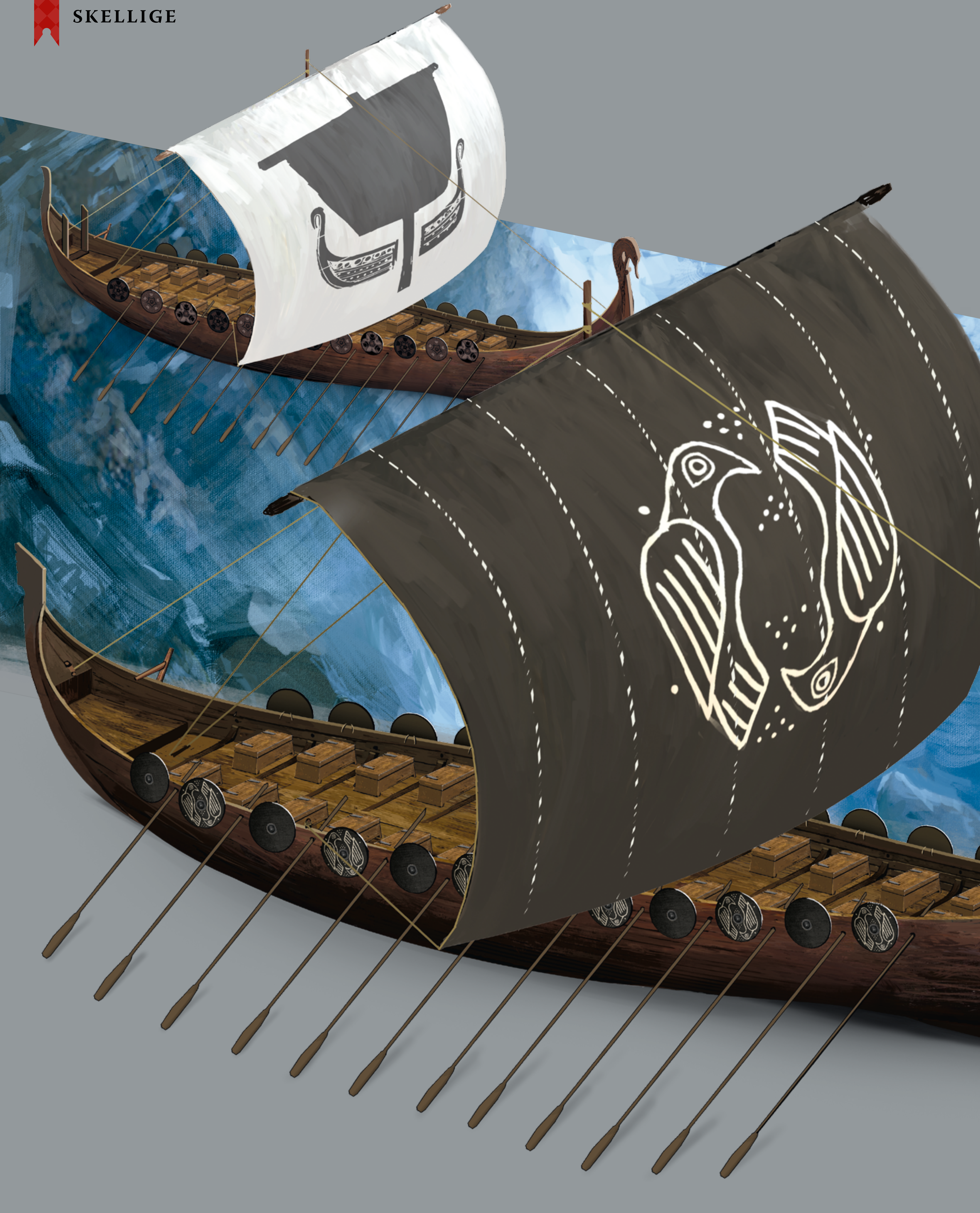


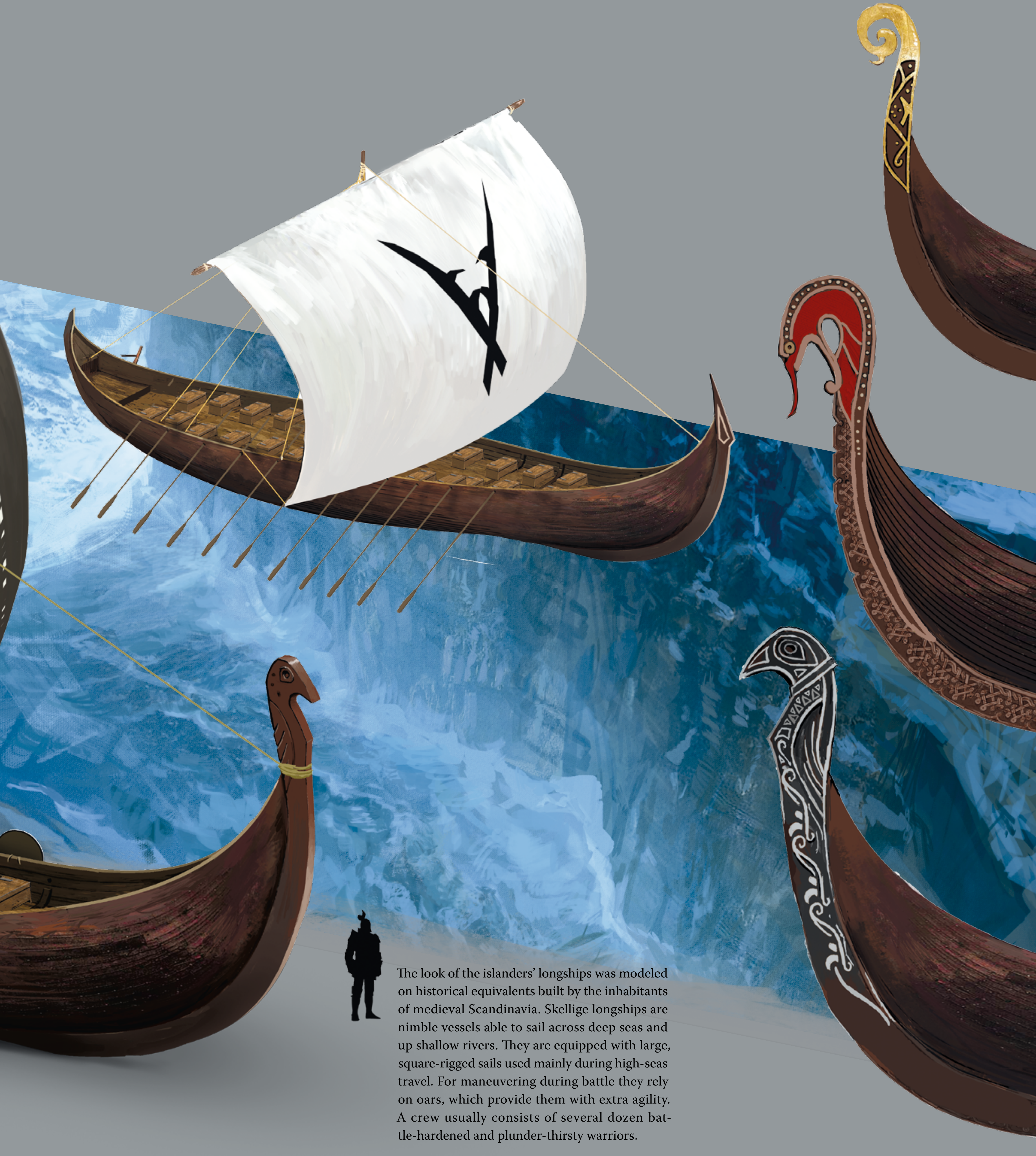




Boats are an integral part of the Skellige landscape. They are a necessary means of transport in an archipelago made up of dozens of separate islands and also essential for fishing, trade expeditions, and raiding.

Any decent-sized settlement builds its own boats. This is done in open-air boatyards found in close proximity to the sea. The largest can produce up to a dozen or more longships a year. Once finished, ships are launched and, once outfitted with oars and rigging. They are then ready to sail the high seas.





The look of the islanders' longships was modeled on historical equivalents built by the inhabitants of medieval Scandinavia. Skellige longships are nimble vessels able to sail across deep seas and up shallow rivers. They are equipped with large, square-rigged sails used mainly during high-seas travel. For maneuvering during battle they rely on oars, which provide them with extra agility. A crew usually consists of several dozen battle-hardened and plunder-thirsty warriors.



Some ships lay with their keels facing up, others on their sides, looking as though they had been tossed there by some hellish squall or storm. Still others seemed to sail atop that rocky ocean: they stood upright, their figureheads jutting out proudly and their masts pointing straight up, the remnants of sails fluttering about them.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *THE LADY OF THE LAKE*

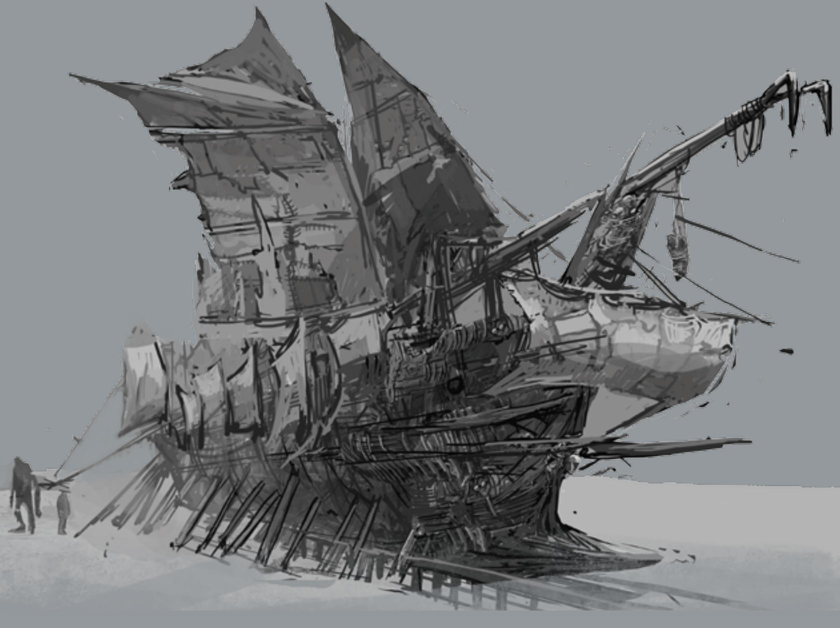


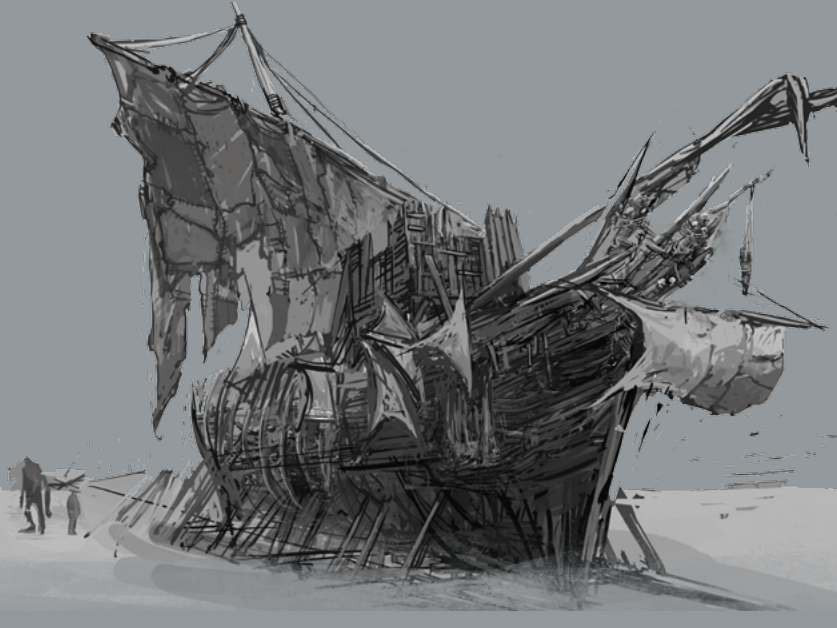


The drawing here and the screenshot from the game found below show the depopulated coasts of Undvik—an island recently laid to waste by the Ice Giant. Wherever one looks, one sees the wrecked remains of longships and smaller vessels. The beach is empty, with no sign of life present save the circling water fowl. This location's slightly surreal atmosphere conveys a feeling of loneliness and all-encompassing cold, made worse by lousy weather and a cool color palette.







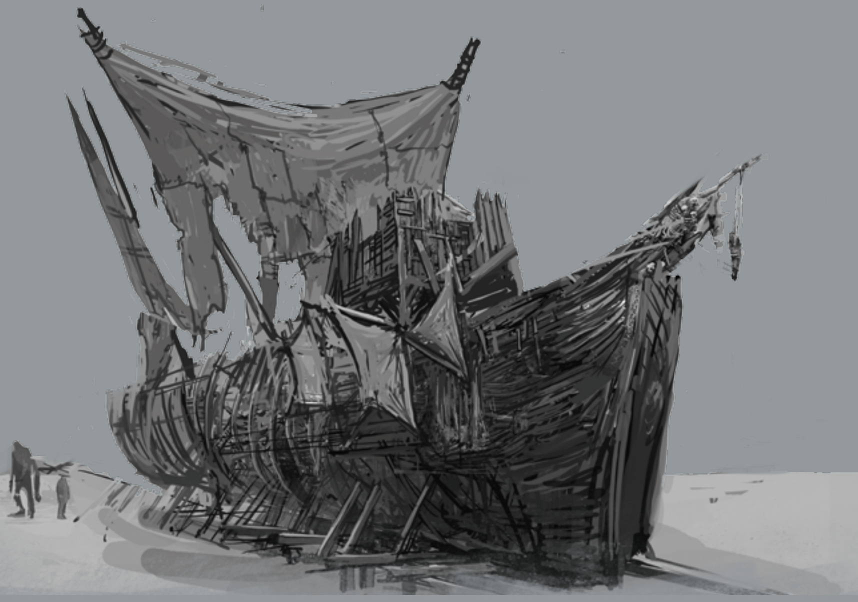




One of the more interesting elements of Undvik's landscape is the Ice Giant's ship. This ramshackle, unfinished construction towers over the wrecks of smaller vessels and clearly has been pieced together from bits raided from their remains. Though the ship hardly seems seaworthy, its very presence enhances the unsettling and unreal atmosphere of the abandoned isle. The sketches on the bottom of this page show its early designs.

















The Ice Giant's lair exudes a similarly grotesque feeling. It is here that the final battle between Geralt and the colossal lord of Undvik will take place.









The magical catastrophe that recently swept over this part of the isle of Ard Skellig has left it looking quite different compared to the surrounding lands. Twisted, gnarled trees form a strange labyrinth of tangled roots, branches, and thick trunks. The area is quiet and dead—birds, beasts, and people all go to great lengths to avoid this place.

Our guiding principle here was to present elements of the normal landscape—trees, bushes, rocks—transformed under the influence of rogue magic. Our concept artists and location artists worked together to give the site of this magical catastrophe its own unique, unreal, and disturbing appearance.

Druids command a great deal of respect and reverence in the Skellige Isles, and so their grove is a special place for the islanders. Here, in the shadow of an enormous, gnarled oak, religious ceremonies and assemblies are held that bring together clans from every corner of Skellige.
The druids dwell in rocky caverns and underground burrows dug beneath the roots of Geddyneith, the ancient oak. The simple rooms are deprived of all creature comforts, something that poses little problem to their inhabitants, who are accustomed to an ascetic lifestyle.



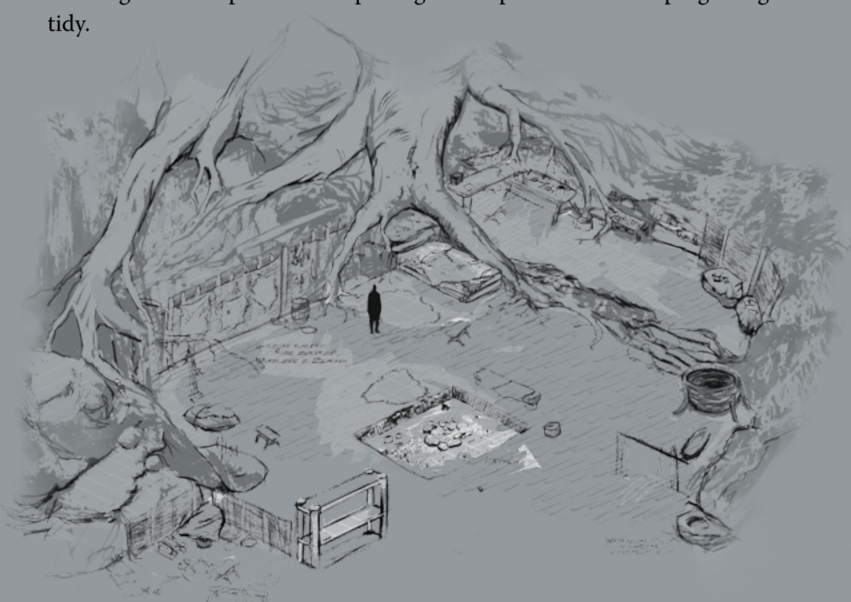








Each chamber contains a small hearth, a straw bed, and a few simple pieces of furniture. Bunches of herbs hang from the ceiling and animal skins dry on the walls. An herbalist's workshop takes up one corner with its alchemical utensils, books, and potted plants. The objects scattered around—bowls, mugs, and small tools—bear witness to the fact that those in charge of this space do not place great importance on keeping things tidy.



SKELLIGE

In the remote parts of Ard Skellig one can come across ruins of a stone circle and an altar dedicated to an ancient deity, Svalblod. His dreadful cult was cast out of the land years ago on account of its bloody practices and cruel rituals, which aroused horror and repulsion even in the violence-habituated denizens of Skellige. Today only a few still remember it ever existed.

At first glance, the place seems calm, the circle abandoned and completely forgotten. Grass and small flowers grow between the rocks. Many of the pillars, decorated with representations of gaping bear maws, lie on the ground, fallen and damaged. Only upon closer inspection does one perceive the disturbing details—dark bloodstains on the altar, proof that someone recently used this place for an act in fitting with its original function.









Under the water's surface one could clearly see enormous, angular, regularly-cut blocks of white marble, their surfaces covered with algae, mollusks, and anemones that swayed in the water like flowers in the wind.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *A LITTLE SACRIFICE*

One of the new elements introduced in this entry in the series is the ability to swim and explore underwater parts of the world. For this reason, we filled the waters around Skellige with intriguing, unique locations. Drowned villages, wrecked ships, underwater caves, and lost treasure await the player in the ocean's depths. One need only take the plunge and dive in to explore a completely new, colorful, and dangerous world. The following illustrations do an excellent job of conveying the feel we wanted to achieve





while designing our underwater locations. The green and light blue colors of the shallows are brightened by light penetrating from the surface. One can clearly see details on the ocean floor, including streams of warm water pumped out by underwater geysers and hot springs. As one descends, the light grows dimmer and dimmer. When the ocean floor suddenly drops off, the water darkens and finally the depths turn to a murky, blackish blue.











Few know the original purpose or even the name of the ruined tower that protrudes from Undvik's rocky shore. It is called Tor Gvalch'c, which in Elder Speech means Tower of the Falcon. Its light, delicate structure and soaring, slender arches reveal at a glance that this building is not the work of human hands. Like its sister towers described in books—Tor Lara, Tower of the Gull, and Tor Zireael, Tower of the Swallow—Tor Gvalch'c was built ages ago by the elves.







CHAPTER IV

The Witchers

Geralt of Rivia, the White Wolf, is undoubtedly the most famous and one of the most experienced members of the caste of monster hunters known as witchers. For dozens of years, he has tirelessly trekked across his world slaying monsters and beasts that threaten human populations. He is a professional in every respect, one whose services are called upon by humble peasants as well as haughty kings.

Though Geralt is one of the last living witchers, a few other members of the Wolf School, his close friends and companions, still walk the Continent. Their winter home is the castle called Kaer Morhen. This chapter will be about this last cohort of Wolf School witchers—the main character of our series of games and his closest comrades.



Geralt of Rivia

Geralt of Rivia is the main protagonist of both our games and the series of books that served as their inspiration. The character's appearance, developed in the previous entries to our trilogy, has become something of an icon—most importantly for the series' fans, but also for all who take an interest in the witcher's world. While working on this character for *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, we tried to keep all his trademark characteristics while enhancing his image and showing the time that has passed from the events at the series' start to the present.



Work on the main character's appearance naturally began with concept art. After sketch after sketch, we finally found a look for Geralt that spoke to us. The drawing shown here was used as the basis for the final model of his head.
A witcher's metabolism slows the aging process and allows him to live longer than normal men. The same applies to Geralt, who at the beginning of this chapter of his adventures is around one hundred years old. Though he is still in perfect health and peak physical condition, we'd like to suggest in some way that he is older than he appears at first glance. That's why we decided to give him a close-cropped beard and a few new scars and wrinkles in order to lend his face the look of a veteran of countless monster hunts who's grown experienced with the passing of many years.





In addition to over a dozen different sets of armor grouped into three weight categories and connected to specific factions, players will also have three unique sets of witcher equipment available to them in the game. The idea was for each of these sets to have three levels of enhancement beyond their basic versions. The improved items come with special modifications, added with expert skill and using rare ingredients, that grant the wearer enviable bonuses. Our goal was to make the sets of armor not only adjustable to the player's preferred playing style, but also clearly different from each other in appearance while still fitting the character of the witcher's world.







Details like the decorations on a sword's hilt or little touches added to armor give witcher equipment its special look and feel.



The symbol of the Wolf School—Geralt's school—is a silver amulet in the shape of a grinning wolf's head. Similar amulets are worn by Vesemir, Eskel, and Lambert.

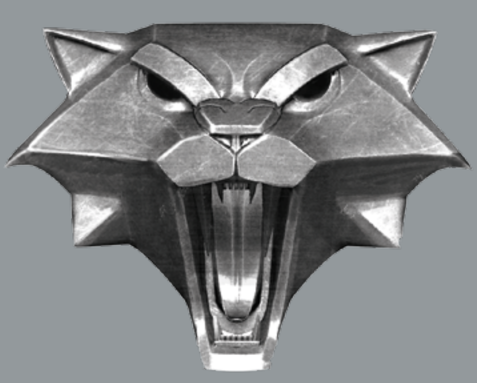
As the universe has expanded, three other amulets have been designed. Two of them—the Griffin and the Cat—appear in one of the *Witcher* books found in the possession of a bounty hunter named Leo Bonhart. After Ciri kills him, she takes both of them and has worn the symbol of the Cat School around her neck ever since.

The appearance of the Viper School amulet was designed for the introduction of the character Letho and his companions, Auckes and Serrit. Whether any members of this school still live is unknown.

















Introducing a light, one-handed crossbow to the witcher's arsenal was an innovative and undoubtedly somewhat controversial move. The witcher novels and the previous installments in the series never show Geralt using ranged weapons. In *The Witcher 3*, however, the player will have to face monsters that take to the seas or the air; since the witcher's "work environment" has changed in this way, it's logical that he would adjust his equipment to suit it. The end result of this line of reasoning was the addition of a weapon that Geralt could make use of while fighting certain creatures that stay out of sword's reach.









The witchers appeared, as usual, unexpectedly, silently, and out of nowhere.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *BLOOD OF ELVES*

Geralt's fellow Wolf School witchers figure prominently in the story of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. They had previously appeared in the prologue of the first game, but since then the engine has changed tremendously and thus Geralt's friends—Eskel and Lambert as well as his teacher and mentor, Vesemir—had to be designed virtually from scratch.

For the sake of continuity, however, old sketches and models of the witchers' faces made for the first game were used as a starting point for the new concepts and models. The end result was a new look for Geralt's three companions that still maintained the key aspects of their former appearance.



Vesemir

Vesemir plays a key role in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. He is one of the main characters in the prologue and also appears later, during one of the game's climactic moments. In portraying him we wanted to emphasize that he is the oldest living witcher, the only one to survive the pogrom which decimated the Wolf School witchers all those years ago.

No one knows exactly how old Vesemir is, but it is possible that he is older than the very stones of Kaer Morhen, among which he once served as a fencing instructor. His gray hair frames the creased, craggy face of an old man, but by juxtaposing this with his well-worn equipment we leave no doubt that he is a veteran witcher, one whose skill could still give many a younger man a run for his money.





Eskel

Eskel is Geralt's peer, although it's true that, since his mutations did not strip his hair of pigment as Geralt's did, he seems somewhat younger. Described as laid-back and taciturn in the books, Eskel stands out more in outward appearance than personality. His face is disfigured by a grotesque scar—a mark left by the blade of his violent and unstable ward, Deidre Ademeyn.

Like Vesemir, Eskel was designed based on his appearance in the first game. A great many new elements were added, however—most importantly, a customized witcher jacket.

Lambert

Lambert is the youngest of the Wolf School witchers. He is known for his unpleasant personality and sharp tongue, both of which distinguish him from his tight-lipped and relatively amiable companions.

As we did for the other witchers, we tried to keep the characteristic aspects of Lambert's appearance established in the first game. Sharp features, an aquiline nose, a few day's stubble and thin lips all fit his difficult manners well. His new clothing differs from that of his elder colleagues in that it is less worn, and its elements form a stylish, matching whole.



Setting the game in an open world forced us to introduce mechanisms for traveling between distant locations quickly. This necessity became a perfect reason to add in a canonical element of the fantasy genre—horse riding and mounted combat. In order to do so we had to develop a model and a set of behaviors for the horse and design its harness, saddle, saddlebags, and all the other gear it would carry. With this in place, Geralt could finally ride quickly and skillfully over the roads and dangerous backwoods of his world in search of contracts.





For travel between the isles of the Skellige Archipelago, the witcher needed to be able to use small sailboats. Putting players' hands on the tiller of such a vessel became a great way to let them explore the Isles' beautiful environment freely and independently.





They rode through another ravine and crested an oval hill. From there they could see the ruins of Kaer Morhen huddled against the cliffs up ahead–the partially-demolished trapezoid of its outer defensive walls, the remains of its barbican and gateway, and its barrel-shaped keep, rising up like a stunted column.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *BLOOD OF ELVES*









The layout and basic concept for the fortress' appearance have not changed much from the first game. It is still an ancient castle, worn down by the sands of time and integrated into the rocky precipices of its mountain home. The walls and towers bear clear signs of destruction. Some of it is the result of the battle that took place here a century and a half ago, while other instances are the handiwork of time and the elements. Weeds and even young trees grow within the fortress, proof of the passage of time and the fact that its present occupants don't devote much attention to its upkeep. The keep's interior looks somewhat better–the living chambers of Kaer Morhen still act as a sort of asylum and safe haven in which the last witchers of the Wolf School can hunker down for the winter.





CHAPTER V

Allies and Acquaintances

Geralt encounters dozens of different people during his adventures—men of wealth and influence, powerful sorceresses, calculating politicians, and fierce warrior chiefs, to name but a few. Thus, while the white-haired monster slayer unquestionably remains the hero of *The Witcher 3*, the game would not be the same without a cohort of colorful and well-defined main and secondary characters. Some have accompanied Geralt from the very first moments the public was introduced to him, while others will make their first appearances in the third installment in the series. All, however, are firmly implanted in the rich soil of our world, the finest details of their life stories and appearances having been worked out by our team during development.

[...] as the host, I will take upon myself the pleasant duty of welcoming our guest to Castle Stygga. Cirilla of Cintra, daughter of Pavetta, granddaughter of Calanthe, descendant of the famous Lara Dorren aep Shiadhal – welcome, and please, do come closer.

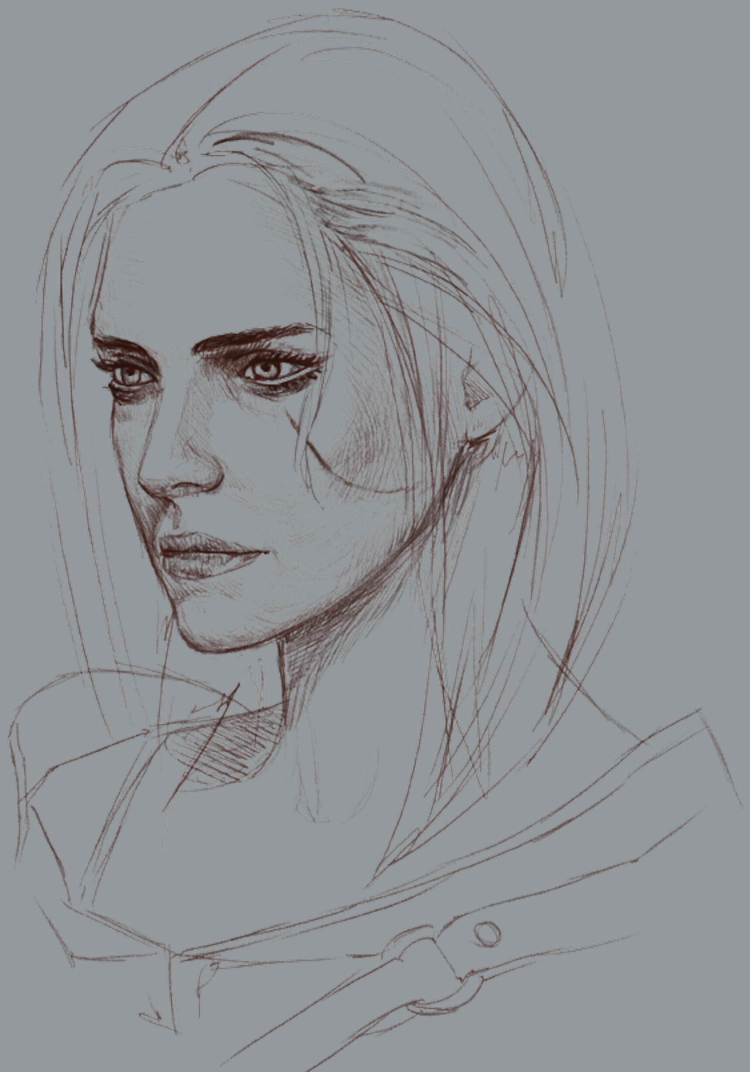
ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *THE LADY OF THE LAKE*



Ciri

Ciri, or rather Cirilla Fiona Elen Riannon, is heir to the Kingdom of Cintra, a once-independent realm that is now an annexed province of the Nilfgaardian Empire. At the same time, she is heir to the throne of that empire as well, being the daughter of the current emperor, Emhyr var Emreis. Before she was born she was promised to Geralt of Rivia through the ancient Law of Surprise, which bound her fate to his with powerful ties of destiny. This inter-linkage of fates has enabled Geralt to save her life on many occasions and led to him taking her on as his ward, adopted daughter, and protégé.

Hints and mentions of Ciri could be found in the two previous games, but only now will she appear in the flesh. Gifted with tremendous and mysterious talents, she is without a doubt one of the most interesting characters in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. Her adventures as she is pursued by both Geralt and the Wild Hunt frame much of the game's story. In the *Witcher* books (which take place several years before the events in the games), Cirilla was a young teenager trained in the rudiments of the witchers' style of fighting. She returns in this game as a young woman, one who both wields a sword better than almost any master and can make confident use of her special powers.







We drew a great many concepts for adult Ciri's face during the development of this character, including quite a few sketches of different hairstyles. We tried to make her appearance as faithful as possible to the descriptions of her younger self in the books. In addition to her famous ashen hair, one of Ciri's most characteristic features is the jagged scar across her left cheek. This is the remnant of a wound she received from a renegade imperial agent plotting against her father, Emhyr.



Ciri's sword shares her elven name, Zireael, meaning "the Swallow." It is described in the books as a masterpiece of gnomish craftsmanship. We created a broad variety of different looks for it while working on its concept art. One of the Swallow's characteristic traits was the finely-cut openwork designs on its blade that lower its weight and provide for better balance.





A childhood portrait of Cirilla was drawn up for use in the game. In it the young heir to the throne of Cintra poses next to the emblem of her kingdom: three golden lions against a sky blue background. Ciri stares at us with the pouty and mightily unhappy face of a girl clearly less than pleased at having to pose in rich and undoubtedly uncomfortable courtly attire. This painting was a good opportunity to show the character's stubborn and unruly nature—something which has remained with her as an adult.



Cirilla's clothing was conceptualized from the start as adventurer's gear made up of an assortment of elements in a variety of styles. Its patchwork nature reflects Ciri's stormy past—similar to how she dressed as a teenager on the run, when she joined a group of young bandits and troublemakers. We came up with many different versions of this attire, with the first drawings differing greatly from the final version you can see on the right.

Ciri's simple linen shirt and leather bodice, pants, and gloves contrast sharply with her ornate silver belt, set with precious stones. Her high boots show clear signs of wear, evidence that she has spent much time on the road. Completing the look as a whole are her accessories: the small bags strapped to her belt and the knight's dagger—or "misericorde"—hanging from her side.



Yennefer

The sorceress Yennefer of Vengerberg—a one-time member of the Lodge of Sorceresses, Geralt's love, and teacher and adoptive mother to Ciri—is without a doubt one of the two key female characters appearing in the *Witcher* books and games.

The books provided our artists with a great deal of detailed information about Yennefer's appearance, including everything from her hairstyle, figure, and height to the color of her eyes and hair to such nuances as the shape of her face and nose. All of these traits were considered while drawing the concepts and creating the model for this sorceress.





'Your star...' Ciri muttered. 'What is it made of? Those little stones, they move and shine in the strangest way...'

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *BLOOD OF ELVES*

An important detail of Yennefer's attire in the books was her famous diamond-encrusted obsidian star pendant that moved and pulsed with magic energy. Hung from a black velvet ribbon around her neck, it was the sorceress' personal amulet and gave a significant boost to her magical abilities. Since the books do not provide us with any more detailed information about its appearance, many different concepts for this key personal item were developed.

Introducing the character of Yennefer brought with it the need to develop a look for her clothing from scratch. Choosing the color scheme was the simplest part, because all the many descriptions of her in the books made it clear that she always dressed in tasteful combinations of black and white. The books also gave enough information to reconstruct a general style for the sorceress. White shirts with lace trim, long black coats, black trousers or stockings, and high-heels—all these elements suggest elegant attire that flatters Yennefer's figure while accentuating her independent, strong-willed character. This was the starting point for the creation of several versions of the sorceress' outfit that differed in terms of style and details. You can see the one chosen for the character's final implementation on the opposite page.







During her travels, Yennefer would at times choose to don more masculine attire, trading in her long dresses in favor of more practical riding trousers. Though we had no detailed description of these at our disposal, one can venture to guess that Yennefer's traveling gear would balance functional and aesthetic concerns. Like the rest of the sorceress' clothing, this outfit maintains a color scheme made up of shades of black and white.



Triss Merigold

Triss Merigold is easily one of the most important supporting characters in our series of games, having appeared and played a key role in all three installments. This young but extraordinarily talented sorceress shares a complicated history with Geralt, one that exists somewhere on the spectrum between an on-and-off love affair and a deep, years-long friendship.

The main traits of Triss Merigold's appearance, such as the shape of her face, her hairstyle, and her figure, were mainly based on the model created for her in the second game in the series. Only her clothing has changed significantly—it is now more elegant, more in fitting with the reigning style in Novigrad, the city of riches and fashion in which she now lives. Triss' clothes still reflect her own tastes, however, including her fondness for cuts that emphasis her slim waist, a point of extreme pride for Triss in the books.



'Don't worry,' the sorceress smiled. 'I'm neither bandit nor stranger. My name is Triss Merigold. My destination's Kaer Morhen.'

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *BLOOD OF ELVES*









During the concept design phase, many different versions of Triss' attire were drawn up using different color palettes, details like trim or ornamentation, and accessories like coats, hoods, and cloaks. The illustrations on this page show what our artists came up with.



'You don't follow fashion,' the bard said with a grimace, brushing chicken feathers from the cuff of his glossy cornflower blue tunic with leg-of-mutton sleeves [...].

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *'ETERNAL FIRE', IN THE SWORD OF DESTINY*

Dandelion

World-renowned poet, dandy, and consummate ladies' man—that, in a nutshell, is Dandelion, Geralt's dearest friend. Like Triss, this somewhat melodramatic and slightly self-absorbed, but still likeable, troubadour is one of the characters who has been with us since the first game in the series.

Dandelion's elegant clothing has always been one of his key traits. He has a certain preferred style but is a keen follower of fashion and eagerly buys new clothing to keep on the forefront of the latest trends. While working on the latest incarnation of his look we tried to incorporate this aspect into his attire.

In this game Dandelion has taken up residence in Novigrad and dresses in the sumptuous style favored in the city, though sticking with his favorite color, a shade of plum violet spiked with gold thread elements. He has traded in his floppy hat for a burgher's beret, though of course topped with his hallmark feather. The character's look suggest that he has been doing well for himself of late, or perhaps—which in his case is just as likely—he is merely trying to make others think that.

Though Dandelion has not abandoned his freewheeling lifestyle, to a certain extent the poet's life has undergone some alterations. We operated on the assumption that these alterations would be reflected in his outward appearance. The troubadour has started dressing in much more lavish garments while still keeping with the unique style developed for him in the previous games. This is what we had in mind as we created various versions of his wardrobe, adding and changing individual elements until we had achieved an overall effect with which we were satisfied.







This portrait of Dandelion presented in the style of a monster slayer is meant as a touch of humor that also conveys the poet's tendency towards buffoonish pomposity. His exaggeratedly heroic pose, his gigantic sword, his flowing crimson cape, and the dead, dragon-like creature at his feet all allude to depictions of Saint George.







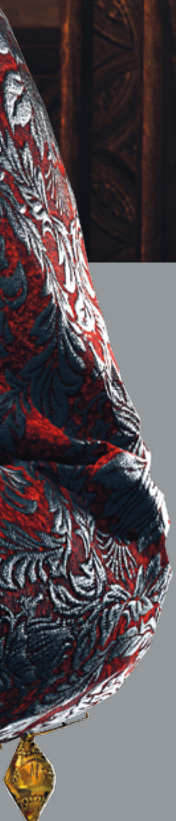
Emhyr var Emreis

Emhyr var Emreis, Deithwen Addan yn Carn aep Morvudd, or the White Flame Dancing on the Graves of his Enemies, is ruler of the Nilfgaardian Empire, an unflinching strategist, and a consummate statesman. For nearly two decades he has been carrying out plots and intrigues that have eliminated his enemies and political opponents and paved the way for his empire's further conquests. Up until now his only mention in the games was as the mastermind behind the assassinations of the kings of the North, operating from his distant capital via diplomats and spies. In this installment in the series, he will finally make a personal appearance as he plays the last hand in his great game.

The emperor's appearance was based off descriptions found in the *Witcher* books. He tended to dress modestly without showy elements, in attire even more subdued than that of the Nilfgaardian courtiers and aristocrats surrounding him. His clothing is predominantly black, the only departure being his dark red sleeves, though even they are decorated with dark patterns. He wears a simple neckband made of interlocking pieces of flat gold and a pendant in the shape of the Great Sun, the Empire's emblem.







The White Flame Dancing on the Graves of his Enemies walked into the room. [...] His black clothing did not differ in any way from that of his courtiers, if one does not count the absence of a cross.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *TIME OF CONTEMPT*

Emhyr is described as someone who commands respect with his very presence, and that was a trait we tried to convey while designing his appearance. Though elegant, the emperor's clothing is quite modest and contrasts with what one would expect from the unimaginably wealthy and powerful ruler of half the known world. The golden imperial neckband mentioned above is, in addition to a few rings, the only decorative part of his attire.

This imperial neckband—called a torc'h in Elder Speech—was not described in any detail in the books, save to say that it was worn during official ceremonies. Its final appearance resulted from a combination of elements taken from historical examples of similar golden chains and ornaments designed for this purpose.

'I, dear Geralt, know a great deal. That is, after all, what is suggested by my, as you humans would put it, academic title. It is, in full, Aen Saevherne.'
'A knowing one. A Sage.'
'Exactly.'

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *THE TOWER OF THE SWALLOW*



Avallac'h

The elf Avallac'h is a highly enigmatic figure. The taciturn and rather secretive mage seems to know a great deal about Ciri's destiny and her mysterious gift, but is reluctant to share that knowledge with others. Thus, doubts remain as to his motives, though one can be certain that, as an Aen Saevherne—meaning Sage—he wields tremendous power, commanding abilities far above and beyond those of any human sorcerer. We tried to make Avallac'h's appearance fit these traits as well as the role he plays in the story. Cirilla's mysterious ally is dressed in functional, well-tailored traveling attire cut according to the tastes of his race, the Aen Elle elves. He wears tall, lace-up boots with soft leather soles, a gray outer cloak decorated with delicate plant motifs, and a hood that covers his head. A scarf is wrapped around his shoulders and a leather belt sits around his waist with a small bag attached to it. A touch accentuating the somewhat different tastes of elven fashion is the slightly asymmetric cut to his clothing, which gives it a rather exotic look.



Creating a look for Avallac'h also meant coming up with an overall concept for Aen Elle clothing. Both their everyday wear and their traveling attire were designed to contrast strongly with the ghastly and brutal look of the Wild Hunt. The colors favored by the inhabitants of Tir ná Lia are subdued, warm pastel shades adorned with subtle embroidery work and appliqué elements. They wear loose, flowing robes that simultaneously flatter their slender figures. These same principles were used for the designs of Avallac'h's look.

On the move and chased by the Wild Hunt, Avallac'h tries as best he can to stay anonymous, hiding his identity by covering the upper half of his face with a mask.



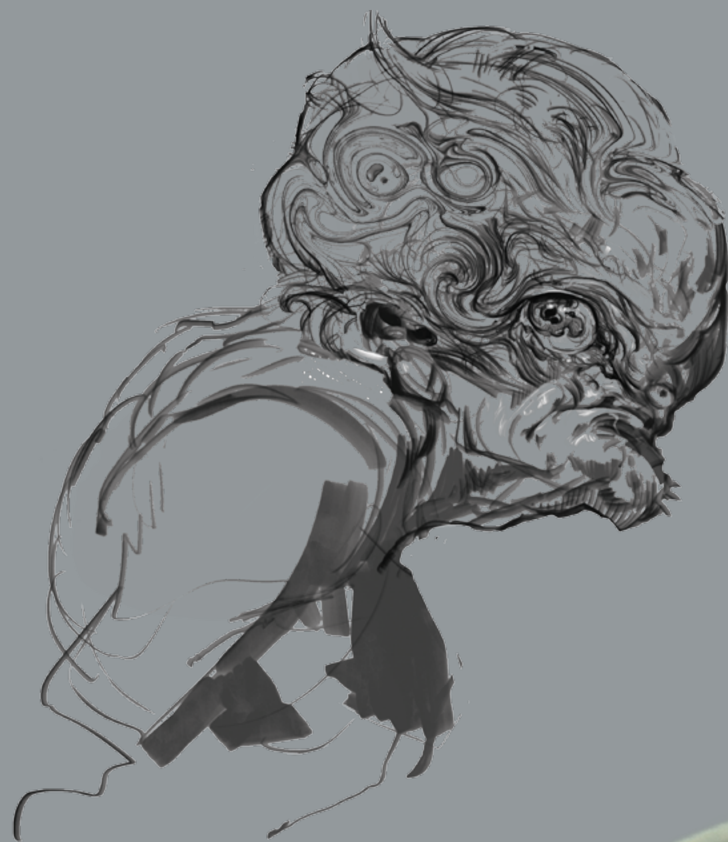


Uma

The mysterious, deformed creature known as Uma appears several times over the course of the main storyline. The extent of this being's deformation means one cannot even ascertain his race with much certainty. One thing is clear, however: he has not had an easy life. To most of those who encounter him in the game, Uma is a freak of nature, a curious monstrosity and the source of endless jokes at his expense. Uma does not seem to mind any of this—in fact, to the extent that he can be said to have any mind at all, its condition appears to be just as bad as his body's.

Uma's appearance is the result of a curse and is meant to arouse both pity and disgust—his deformed head, set almost directly atop hunched shoulders, tilts slightly to one side, as if constantly wincing in surprise. His thin arms are of differing lengths and his crooked legs seem barely up to the task of supporting the weight of his wart-covered body. Topping this all off are the dirty rags tied around his body with rope, and the random objects hanging from them that constitute his only possessions.







We tried to make the results of the curse that transformed Uma into the ugly creature he is now as convincing as possible. The concept drawings and sketches above present the process we went through while creating his appearance—starting with black-and-white sketches and ending with various color versions of this character.



Dijkstra

Sigismund Dijkstra—former Redanian count, one-time chief of that kingdom's special forces, and current crime boss in Novigrad. As he was an important character in the books, we drew on the descriptions of him there as we designed his look for the game. Dijkstra as presented in the books is a spy that goes against most stereotypes we have about that profession. Rather than a thin, rat-like individual with dark eyes staring out of a black hood, he is a strong man of nearly seven feet who prefers richly ornamented, brightly colored garb and hides an astute, enterprising mind under a somewhat sleepy face.

Voorhis

Morvran Voorhis is a true Nilfgaardian, a title rightfully applied only to those born in the core lands of the Empire. This young, promising officer is the scion of an ancient imperial family, and many see in him a possible candidate for the imperial throne.

Voorhis dresses after the Nilfgaardian style, meaning he limits his clothing to a color palette consisting of black and gold. This drawing shows an early design for the character, one whose task was to convey Morvran's overall nature: proud, aware of his high rank and what it entails, and equally comfortable on the battlefield or in courtly salons.



Radovid

The current king of Redania, Radovid V the Stern, is one of the most influential rulers in the North. Calculating, vengeful, and suspicious to the verge of paranoia, Radovid governs his kingdom with an iron fist, bloodily suppressing any signs of discontent or opposition.

Radovid dresses in Redanian colors: red with white and gold touches. The royal emblem—a white eagle against a red backdrop—decorates the monarch's chest. Fearing an assassination attempt, Radovid wears a long chain mail garment under his robes at all times, hoping this will protect him from any who conspire to stab him in the back. To the same end, he always carries a weapon—hanging from his silver-studded knight's belt is a simple dagger, one decidedly more functional than ornamental.

Crach

Crach an Craite—jarl of Ard Skellig, fearless sea captain, and one of his people's mightiest warriors. This broad-shouldered, powerfully-built islander is around forty years old, though his bushy beard and craggy, weather-beaten face make him appear somewhat older.

Crach is dressed in sturdy, functional attire crafted from thick wool and leather. A few ornamental accessories serve as markers of his high social status: rings, a brooch pinned to a thick fur coat, and a simple band across his forehead made of gold and silver. Though some on the Continent dismiss him as a primitive barbarian, Crach is in fact a shrewd politician and carefully weighs his every decision, preferring prudence over rash bravura.







Hjalmar

Hjalmar an Craite, Crach's elder child, is a good illustration of the saying "like father, like son"—especially when it comes to appearance. He is in this respect almost the exact opposite of his sister, having inherited his father's massive frame, broad facial features, and ferocity, but sadly very little of his prudence or patience.

Hjalmar wears the simple garb of a Skellige warrior. One can tell at a glance he is man who lives for battle and prefers to solve problems with brute strength. His battered face, which earned him the nickname "Crooked Gob" as a young lad, is the result of a spill he took while trying to show off on ice skates to a certain Cirilla, his one-time childhood playmate.

Cerys

The character Cerys, Crach's daughter, was designed from scratch for the purposes of this game. Called Sparrowhawk by some, this brave, strong-willed, and yet at the same time prudent young woman takes after her father more in manner than appearance.

The clothes Cerys wears combine elements of feminine attire with some more militaristic touches. A woolen gambeson with a fur collar and metal shoulder plates sit atop a base layer consisting of a simple blue dress with ornamental stitching on the sleeves. A wide leather belt similar to the one worn by her father wraps around her waist. Adding a bright splash of color is her red checkered scarf, a symbol showing she belongs to Clan an Craite.





The Bloody Baron

Phillip Strenger, better known to many in Velen as the Bloody Baron, is one of the interesting and ambiguous characters Geralt encounters during his search for Ciri. He is a stocky man with a dark beard streaked with gray and the rough face of a bandit, though in truth he is a former Temerian soldier who has taken over a local lord's castle called Crow's Perch and declared himself its new ruler.

The baron's attire is a personalized mix of military gear—a well-worn gambeson, a studded jacket, a metal breastplate and greaves—with sumptuous, expensive outer robes that undoubtedly once belonged to the former lord of Crow's Perch. Completing the ensemble are a leather belt and a shoulder strap from which hang a knight's short sword and a bandit's knife.

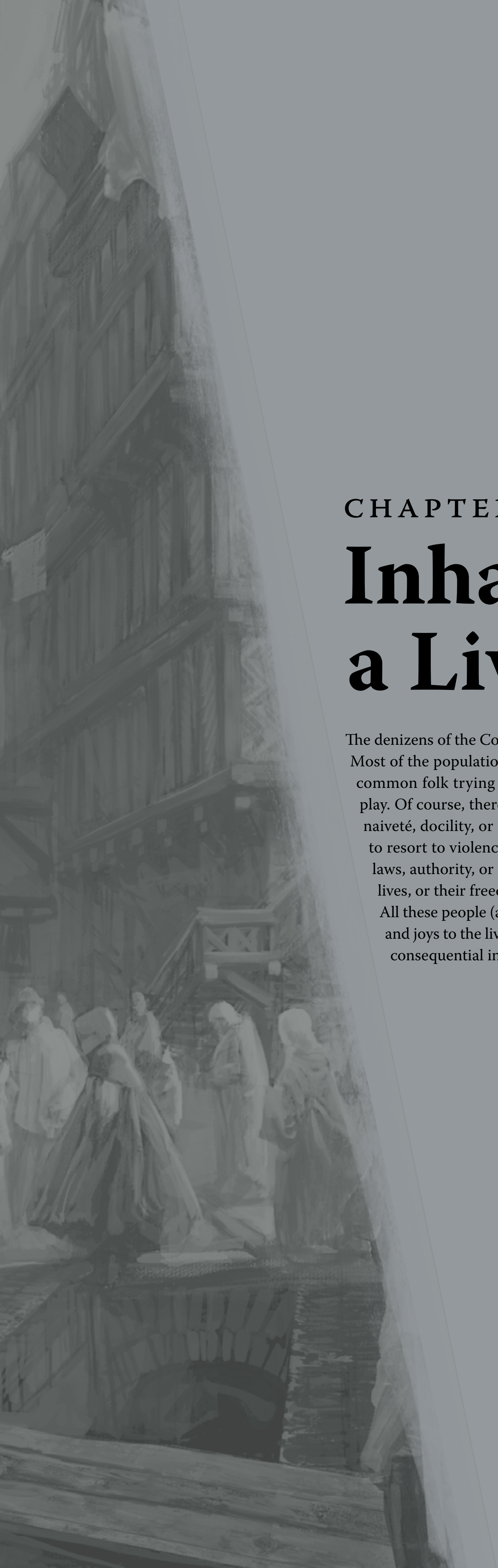


Tamara

The baron's daughter, Tamara, is a strong and independent young woman hardened by a difficult life and unhappy childhood. Her appearance differs somewhat from the description given to Geralt by her father, who sees her only as his beloved little girl. After running away from home, Tamara turned to faith for support and decided to join the witch hunters, a militant group of Eternal Fire fanatics.

Tamara's clothing consists of a quilted woolen gambeson with metallic armor elements protecting her shoulders, elbows, thighs, and knees. A wide leather belt provides extra protection for her abdomen, while two parallel, thinner belts provide a place to hang bags and parchment cases carrying arrest warrants and papers identifying her as a witch hunter.





CHAPTER VI

Inhabitants of a Living World

The denizens of the Continent and the Skellige Isles consist of more than just the rich and powerful. Most of the population dwelling in the large cities, small towns, and tiny villages of this world are common folk trying to lead normal, honest lives. They work, trade, love, hate, fight, worry, and play. Of course, there are plenty who shirk hard labor and instead take advantage of the weakness, naiveté, docility, or inattention of others to unjustly enrich themselves. Many also do not hesitate to resort to violence, using force to expropriate the property of others or spread their own beliefs, laws, authority, or religion. Still others reach for weapons to defend their hearths and homes, their lives, or their freedom.

All these people (and non-people such as elves, halflings, and dwarves) add their conflicts, problems, and joys to the living depth of our world. For this reason, we made every effort to make even its least consequential inhabitants as distinct and colorful as possible.

Novigrad Townspeople

Novigrad is inhabited by an unusually colorful group of both permanent residents and those in town on long and short-term visits. Most eye-catching amidst the throngs of common townsfolk, stall-keepers, and craftsmen are those practicing the more roguish professions. On these pages you'll find some of the drawings and sketches we made while creating concepts for the masters of these trades—everyone from the feared and despised witch hunters through courtesans, bandits, thugs and cut-purses, and ending with beggars.







Skellige Islanders

In addition to warriors from each of the various clans, we also drew up concepts for the female denizens of the isles. Their clothing is modeled on early medieval dress worn in the northern parts of Europe. Also on this page are sketches showing concepts for islander bandits and pirates as well as the Vildkarls—berserkers who live in the wild, unpopulated highlands of the isles.









The inhabitants of Skellige are divided into six clans, each seated on one of the archipelago's larger islands. Every Skellige clan has its own characteristic colors that define it as a distinct group bound by family ties and age-old traditions. These colors also act as a distinguishing mark that lets warriors easily identify each other on the field of battle.







No Man's Land

In the depopulated wastes of No Man's Land one often runs across armed men of all stripes—mercenaries, soldiers from the disbanded Temerian legions, marauders, and common bandits. We wanted these characters to differ from one another while remaining true to the style and atmosphere of the witcher's world, which is for the most part based on authentic medieval armor, weapons, and clothing. We stuck to similar principles while designing the look for the common people of Velen.





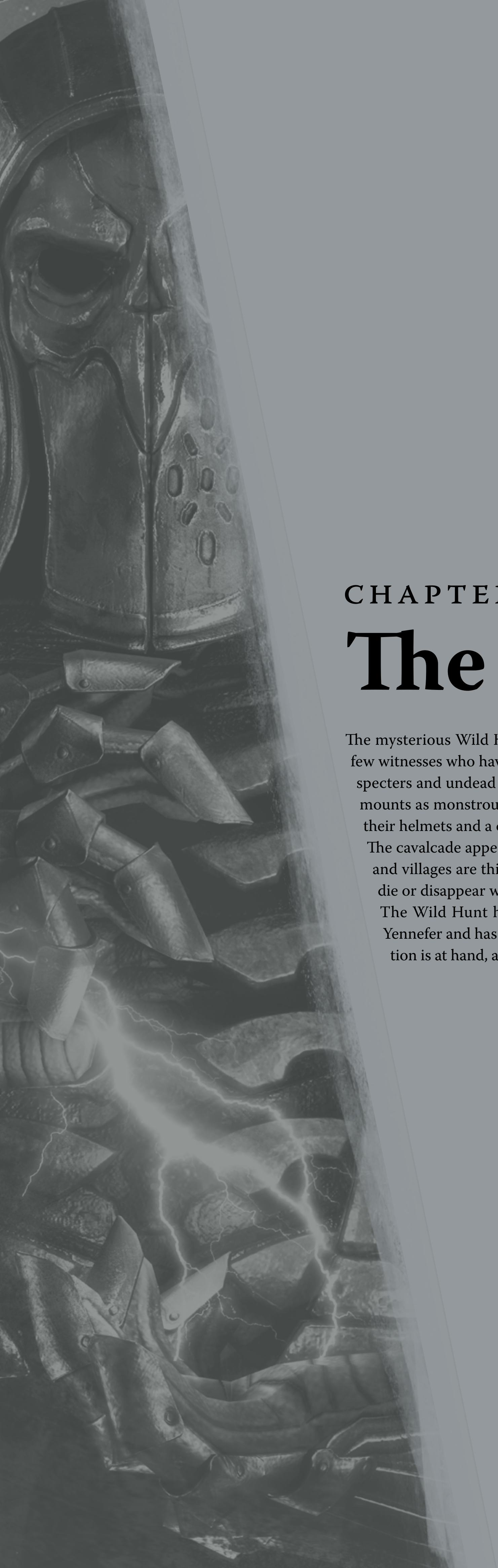


Nilfgaardians

The Nilfgaardians occupying Velen represent a separate and distinct group. Most of them are soldiers who marched into these lands a few months prior and, after a victorious campaign, have claimed it for the Empire. The previous game featured steel-clad Nilfgaardian guards wearing helmets decorated with black feathers, but in this one we wanted to show other, less elite, more rank-and-file Nilfgaardian formations. The Empire's war machine is colossal and the soldiers in its ranks come from a variety of culturally distinct provinces, vassal kingdoms, and duchies. Examples of this can be seen in the sketches showing different concepts for Nilfgaardian cavalry brigades—from lightly armored riders to heavy lancers astride armored war horses.







CHAPTER VII

The Wild Hunt

The mysterious Wild Hunt has been a nightmare haunting the witcher's world for centuries. The few witnesses who have seen it at close proximity and survived describe it as a horrific cavalcade of specters and undead warriors racing across the night sky. Clad in ghastly cavalry armor, they ride mounts as monstrous and terrifying as they themselves. Rotten, skeletal teeth grin out from under their helmets and a cold fire burns in their empty eye sockets.

The cavalcade appears out of nowhere, its coming presaged only by a piercing cold. Isolated towns and villages are this monstrous brigade's most frequent prey. Those who are unable to flee in time die or disappear without a trace.

The Wild Hunt has long stalked the footsteps of the witcher and his loved ones. It kidnapped Yennefer and has tracked Ciri through dozens of different times and places. Now the final confrontation is at hand, and Geralt will soon have to face the King of the Hunt and his minions in open battle.

At the cavalcade's head rode the King of the Hunt. A rust-eaten bassinet swayed above a skull-like mask and gaping eye-sockets [...]

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *TIME OF CONTEMPT*

Eredin

Eredin Bréacc Glas, King of the Wild Hunt, is the ultimate enemy in *The Witcher 3* and the fiercest opponent Geralt has ever faced. This merciless, calculating, and ambitious warrior will stop at nothing to achieve his goal: capturing Ciri. Eredin has led the Hunt's riders for dozens, possibly even hundreds, of years. In order to inspire greater terror, he wears armor making him look like a ghastly wraith. Elements of it are enameled in red and shaped so as to resemble a body whose skin has been flayed off. Crowning the armor is a skull-shaped helmet made of black steel, heavy, spiked brassards and greaves, and an openwork breastplate shaped to resemble skeletal ribs. Galloping on his mount, sword raised in the air, Eredin seems to most mortal men the incarnation of their worst possible nightmare.









Very few are aware of the fact, but underneath the King of the Wild Hunt's ghastly armor lies a being made of flesh and blood. The Riders of the Wild Hunt are in truth not wraiths, but warriors of the Aen Elle, the Alder Folk, distant relatives of the Aen Seidhe, the elves inhabiting the world in which our tale takes place.
Beneath the helmet of the King himself lies the face of Eredin, ruler and general of the Aen Elle. His face is slim and attractive, though clearly marked by cold cruelty. Dark, deep-set eyes, aristocratic features, a pale complexion, and thin lips twisted into a slight grimace complete our main antagonist's appearance.
The illustrations on the right show different versions of the King of the Wild Hunt's helmet.



The nightmarish cavalcade turned and soared directly towards her, the hooves of their spectral mounts churning the gleam of will o' the wisps in the sky above the swamp. [...] The King of the Hunt reared his skeletal steed and let out a wild, terrifying laugh.

ANDRZEJ SAPKOWSKI, *TIME OF CONTEMPT*



The Wild Hunt's warriors are described in the novels as terrifying riders astride no-less-terrifying steeds. Like the elves mounted atop them, these horses owe their ghastly appearance to armor stylized to make them look like undead creatures. The illustrations on this page show one of the early versions of the King of the Wild Hunt riding his armor-clad steed. The armor was modeled to a certain extent on historical examples of protective fittings for horses, known as barding.







In the world of the Aen Elle, Eredin Bréacc Glas once led an elite cavalry unit known as Dearg Ruadhri, meaning the Red Riders in Elder Speech. It was this unit that constituted the initial core of the Wild Hunt, an elite formation able to move between worlds. The initial number of Dearg Ruadhri is not known, yet one can confidently assume that it rose greatly after Eredin ascended the throne after the death of his predecessor, King Auberon. These skilled Aen Elle warriors are foes that Geralt will have to face many times in this installment of the series.

The warriors of the Wild Hunt are attired in a way similar to that of their leader—heavy armor with skull motifs and bare, protruding bones to make them look like wraiths. The armor adheres to the general style used by the people in the world they are invading; that way, their victims mistake them for dead warriors, inspiring terror and hiding their true identity. Although each Dearg Ruadhri is a superbly trained fighter, more skilled than even the most elite soldiers of Nilfgaard or the Northern Realms, this extra element of "psychological warfare" tips the scales even further in favor of the Aen Elle.





Imlerith

Imlerith, one of the commanding officers of the Wild Hunt, is Eredin's right-hand man and most fervent supporter. This powerful and brutal warrior is a veteran of the many wars of conquest the Aen Elle have waged against other worlds over the course of centuries. Imlerith prizes physical confrontation and direct, bloody battles in which training, quickness, and strength determine who lives and who dies.

Imlerith's armor is covered with blade marks—mementos earned during his thousands of battles. His high, heavy brassards protect his neck and shoulders as well as his head. Like the other warriors of the Hunt, his chest is protected by armor with a reinforced, openwork breastplate stylized to resemble a bare ribcage. Steel gauntlets and decorated, segmented bracers guard his hands and forearms, while his thighs, knees, and shins are covered by their own layer of armor. The whole ensemble combines to make this terrifying Aen Elle nearly invulnerable to all blows.





Caranthir

Caranthir is Eredin's second most-trusted lieutenant. His unique abilities have made him a key officer for the Wild Hunt, responsible for guiding their expeditions across the expanses of time and space that separate the Aen Elle's world from others.

His very appearance—gray, fur-lined coat, fancifully-capped helmet, steel staff tipped with a sphere emanating magic energy—makes Caranthir stand out from the other warriors of the Wild Hunt. He stands out in terms of abilities as well, as he is also a powerful mage who relies in combat first and foremost on his spells and supernatural powers. He may not be as dangerous as Imlerith in a direct fight, but he can swing his steel staff with murderous speed and agility—something which his opponents will get to witness firsthand during *The Witcher 3*.







Skellige legend speaks of a ghastly ship called the Naglfar carrying specters and wraiths from the hideous land of Mörhogg. Though the myth never equates this with the Wild Hunt, the similarities struck us strongly enough that we decided to use this motif to make the Naglfar become Eredin's ship in our story, the vessel that will carry his warriors to the final, decisive battle.







Many sketches and designs for the Naglfar were made. Early ones assumed this ship would fly through the air. In the end, however, the more subdued concepts which better fit the grounded feel of the witcher universe won out. The drawing above shows the final version of the Naglfar, the ghastly Hunt's equally ghastly vessel.

The Wild Hunt also counts among its ranks smaller minions—its Hounds—that accompany its warriors into battle. "Hound" is a bit of a misnomer, for these are no normal dogs, but strange four-legged beasts born in some nameless place far beyond our world and time. While designing these monsters we tried to give them as alien a look as possible. Early designs for the Hounds are shown in the drawings below, while the illustration on the right shows the final version.

At a glance, one can see that any relation these Hounds have to dogs is very distant indeed. Their heads feature blunt snouts and almost no neck whatsoever, melding abruptly into their barrel-chested abdomen. This monster runs on four widely-spaced legs tipped with sharp claws. Its grotesque body is covered in hard, coarse armor. The Hounds of the Hunt are merciless creatures that obey their master's every command and kill with brutal efficiency.

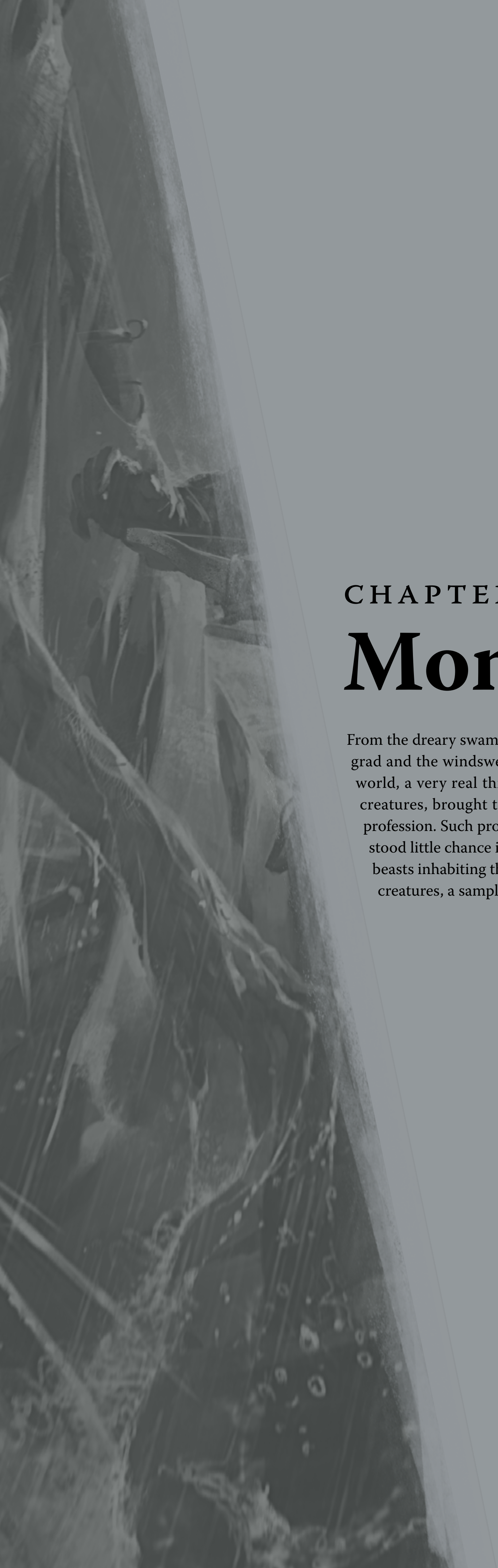












CHAPTER VIII

Monsters

From the dreary swamps and depopulated wastes of Velen to the bustling alleys and canals of Novigrad and the windswept hills and dales of Skellige, monsters are an omnipresent element of this world, a very real threat that every one of its inhabitants must face. It is the existence of these creatures, brought to this world in the Conjunction of the Spheres, that gave rise to the witcher profession. Such professionals were needed because even the best-disciplined, best-trained soldiers stood little chance in a direct fight against some of the larger, more aggressive, or more treacherous beasts inhabiting this brutal and dangerous world. On the following pages we present some of these creatures, a sampling taken from the much larger bestiary of the witcher universe.



The Crones

The Crones of Velen do not come to us from the witcher novels, yet they bring a look and feel that fits in perfectly with the established character of a world full of monsters and other elements drawn from European folklore. These three sisters are not human; instead, they are members of some degenerate breed of humanoid monsters whose origins are hazy, even to scholars and witchers. Each of the three has her own function and unique abilities for performing it. The oldest of the sisters, Whispess, can hear everything that happens in the swamps of Velen thanks to the sliced-off human ears she hangs from the trees and imbues with magic. Brewess brews magic concoctions and mixtures, while the youngest of the three Crones, Weavess, weaves magic fetishes from human hair.



Fiends

Like many other creatures in the witcher universe, fiends are inspired by beings that appear in pagan Slavic beliefs and folk tales, in this case those about amorphous evil spirits called *biesy*. The fiend we created poses a more concrete and immediate danger—not to mention a serious challenge, even for experienced monster hunters such as Geralt of Rivia.





Ice Giant

For the Ice Giant, we drew on creatures described in ancient Scandinavian myths and sagas. He is most likely the last representative of his race in the witcher's world, the sole remaining survivor from those who, thousands of years ago, lived in abundance in the cold regions of the Continent and the Skellige Isles. This brutal and primitive being, responsible for driving off the inhabitants of Undvik, is thus in its own way an antique, a relic of a former age.

The Ice Giant dresses in a parody of human apparel made up of scraps of leather, sails, ship's rigging, shattered shields, and animal bones, and decorates his massive body with primitive drawings. The black-and-white sketch shows the earliest version of this creature's appearance and depicts him with a harpy perched on his forearm.

Plague Maiden

The plague maiden, a spirit personifying disease and pestilence, also has roots in European folklore. In those legends she is most often depicted as a deathly pale woman dressed in a simple white peasant dress, who walks across plague-stricken towns and villages leaving dead, corpse-strewn streets in her wake. The concept drawing created for our game shows the plague maiden in her true, more horrific form. Her rotten, worm-ridden flesh is covered in a ragged shroud seemingly woven from miasma and foul vapors. Crawling out from under it are dozens of plague-bearing rats.



These wraiths' immaterial bodies resemble desiccated female corpses dressed in the tattered remains of the dresses or robes they wore while living. Noonwraiths still wear withered wreaths of flowers atop their heads, while in their hands they hold sickles, attributes tying them to rural life. Nightwraiths wear dark clothing and hold lanterns in their hands, which they use to confuse travelers hurrying home along country roads late at night.



Noonwraiths & Nightwraiths

Taken from Slavic mythology, these female wraiths are only active during certain times of day. Usually they are born of some horrible tragedy tied to ill-fated love. Women falling victim to such events become—depending on the time of day in which they die—either noonwraiths or nightwraiths, with grief, longing, or a thirst for vengeance having cursed them and driven them insane. They are only found in rural areas, primarily meadows, crop fields, orchards, and crossroads, with farmers and travelers being their main victims.

Godlings

Another creature with its origins in Slavic mythology, a godling is not a monster, at least not in the pejorative sense of the word. The godlings of myth were guardian spirits that watched over farmyards and houses, bringing good fortune and wealth in exchange for small offerings of food and drink placed for them by the farmers. Since no descriptions of these creatures have survived, our artists had a great deal of freedom in inventing their appearance. Godlings in the world of the witcher thus look like children with serious, wrinkled faces and disturbingly large eyes. Barefoot and covered in mud, they dress in simple clothing pieced together from discarded rags. Though they might seem frightening at first glance, upon further acquaintance they turn out to be quite pleasant and even helpful in their own way, making them unique among the other, more often dangerous creatures presented here.





Botchlings

Botchlings are cursed beings arising from unwanted fetuses or stillborn babies discarded without a proper burial. They only attack pregnant women, sneaking into their bedrooms at night and siphoning off their life energy until, their victims weakened nearly to death, they can attack and drink of their blood directly.

Botchlings look like macabre, deformed fetuses. They move around on wobbly, crooked legs and are wrapped in their own umbilical cords. In keeping with how they are described in Slavic folklore, they possess two rows of teeth—an attribute also ascribed to strigas, who like botchlings are born from children who die tragically. Also like strigas, botchlings can be cured of the curse that has made them hideous, after which they transform into lubberkins, household guardian spirits.

Water Hags

These deformed humanoids dwell in swamps, bogs, and wetlands as well as on the banks of rivers and lakes. In appearance they resemble gigantic, hunchbacked crones with long, claw-like hands, drooping breasts, tangled hair, and gaping maws full of crooked, yellowed teeth. They hunt lone travelers and fishermen, and sneak into human settlements at night to kidnap the unwary and the unlucky.

Water hags (*baby wodne* in Polish) appear in central and eastern European legends as harmless creatures that peer out at bathing youth. We decided to base our hags instead on tales of creatures such as the infamous Baba Jaga or Baba Drasznica—monstrous old women who feed on human flesh.







Foglets

Considered part of the necrophage family, foglets are creatures gifted with powers of deception they use to haunt unpopulated and wild regions. With their control over fog, their ability to imitate human voices, and the pale light they emit from their bodies, they can lure unwary travelers off the beaten path and into bushes, swamps, or simply off mountain cliffs, feasting on their corpses after they die.

Foglets are only mentioned in passing in the books, and so our artists had a great deal of freedom in giving them a visual identity. During work on these creatures we created many different drawings, though in the end we chose the one shown in the illustration on this page.

Ghouls

Of all the monsters returning in *The Witcher 3* from previous games in the series, ghouls have probably undergone the most change in terms of their appearance. The concept shown here combines the look of a deformed, degenerate humanoid with that of the hyena-like scavengers of our own world. The end result is a grotesque and unsettling four-legged creature. The ghoul's front paws are fitted with massive claws with which it can dig up buried bodies, and its strong jaws are used to crush bones in order to better get at the marrow—its favorite treat.





Alghouls

Alghouls make up a larger, stronger, and more aggressive subspecies of ghoul that otherwise shares most of its cousin's traits. Yet while something human remains in the faces of ghouls, alghouls have almost nothing humanoid left about them. Their legs are widely situated to support their large frames, and cresting their heads are two bony growths that protect them from blows and can be used to scoop up dirt covering tasty bodies.



Bears

Not every danger lying in wait for travelers venturing off the beaten track takes the form of a monster or magical creation. Normal predators also inhabit remote woodland and mountain regions, and when driven by hunger or provoked they can be just as dangerous as ghouls or fiends.
Bears are one such creature featured in *The Witcher 3*. Our artists sought to emphasize these animals' raw strength and heft, as well as their powerful, sharp claws and blunt, grimacing snouts.





Leshens

Leshens are another monster mentioned only in passing in the witcher saga, but one with rich roots in the mythology and folk tales of central and eastern Europe. Described as mysterious, shape-shifting beings possessing power over the forest and its denizens (their Polish name—*leszy*—derives from the Slavic root las, meaning woods), leshens were ideal candidates for use as one of the more interesting opponents Geralt will have to face in the latest game in the series.

The leshen's appearance was inspired by Slavic legends but also by Celtic and Anglo-Saxon descriptions of a distantly related figure, Herne the Hunter—a deep woods spirit fitted with large antlers. Our in-game leshen stands over seven feet tall with an enormous moose or elk skull for a head. The creature's long arms end in powerful claws and its body is adorned with the bones and skulls of its victims. Leshens are incredibly deadly hunters, the ultimate terrors lurking in the darkest woods of the witcher's world.



Katakans

Katakans are one of several species of powerful vampires mentioned in the books. We took as a starting point the idea that all of these nocturnal predators should look more like bats than humans, and thus the katakan possesses many bat-like traits, though stretched to monstrous proportions. There are of course still humanoid elements to its appearance, such as its upright posture, eerily sentient gaze, and the man-made objects collected and woven into its fur, but the being's whole suggests a deadly predator that attacks with membranous wings tipped by razor-sharp claws.



Cockatrices

The cockatrice appears in the legends of several European countries, where it is known for its deadly stare. The version of the beast presented in the *Witcher* books is a one-of-a-kind representative of the fictitious ornithosaur genus, a made-up species combining reptilian and avian traits. The monster's head is decorated with a characteristic red comb that makes it resemble a giant rooster. Though, contrary to popular belief, the cockatrice's gaze does not kill or even turn one into stone, one would still be ill-advised to take this opponent lightly. Its short, seemingly harmless beak is extraordinarily sharp, and the monster wields it with unerring precision and enormous strength, aiming for its victims' eyes, neck, or aorta and dealing deep wounds that bleed profusely.



Sirens

Sirens are bloodthirsty, treacherous creatures that lure naïve travelers in close with their illusory female forms and then, when escape is impossible, transform into hideous monsters and tear their unfortunate victims to shreds. These creatures are commonly confused with mermaids, which are in fact a mostly peaceful race of underwater humanoids. They are quite easy to distinguish, however, because the more deadly sirens have large, bat-like wings that lift them into the air and fold up when swimming.
For the sirens' appearance we drew inspiration from the so-called "flying fish" of our oceans, which have broad pectoral fins that let them glide above the water for short distances.





Griffins

Griffins are, along with dragons, one of the most iconic creatures of the fantasy genre. They exist in the witcher's world as well, though this will be the first game in which these enormous flying monsters will be shown in the full glory they deserve.

Griffins are hybrids, or creatures possessing the traits of two different species. The front portion of a griffin's body—its head, ribcage, and front legs—resembles that of an enormous bird of prey. Its rear, however—its back, hind legs, and tail—is that of an equally enormous predatory cat. This aggressive beast's sheer size, combined with its ability to fly and dive at great speeds, makes killing it a challenge for even the most experienced monster hunter.





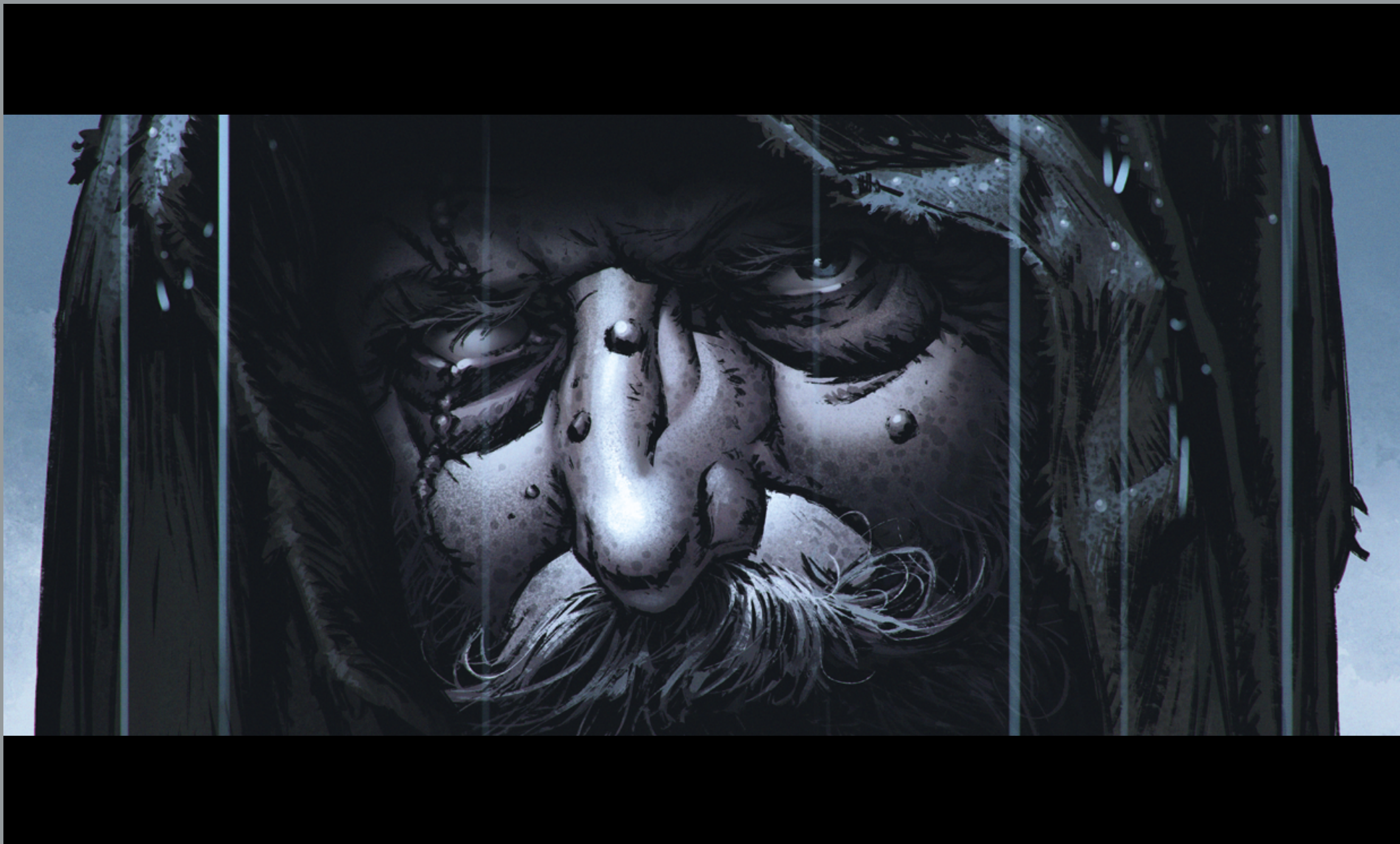
CHAPTER IX

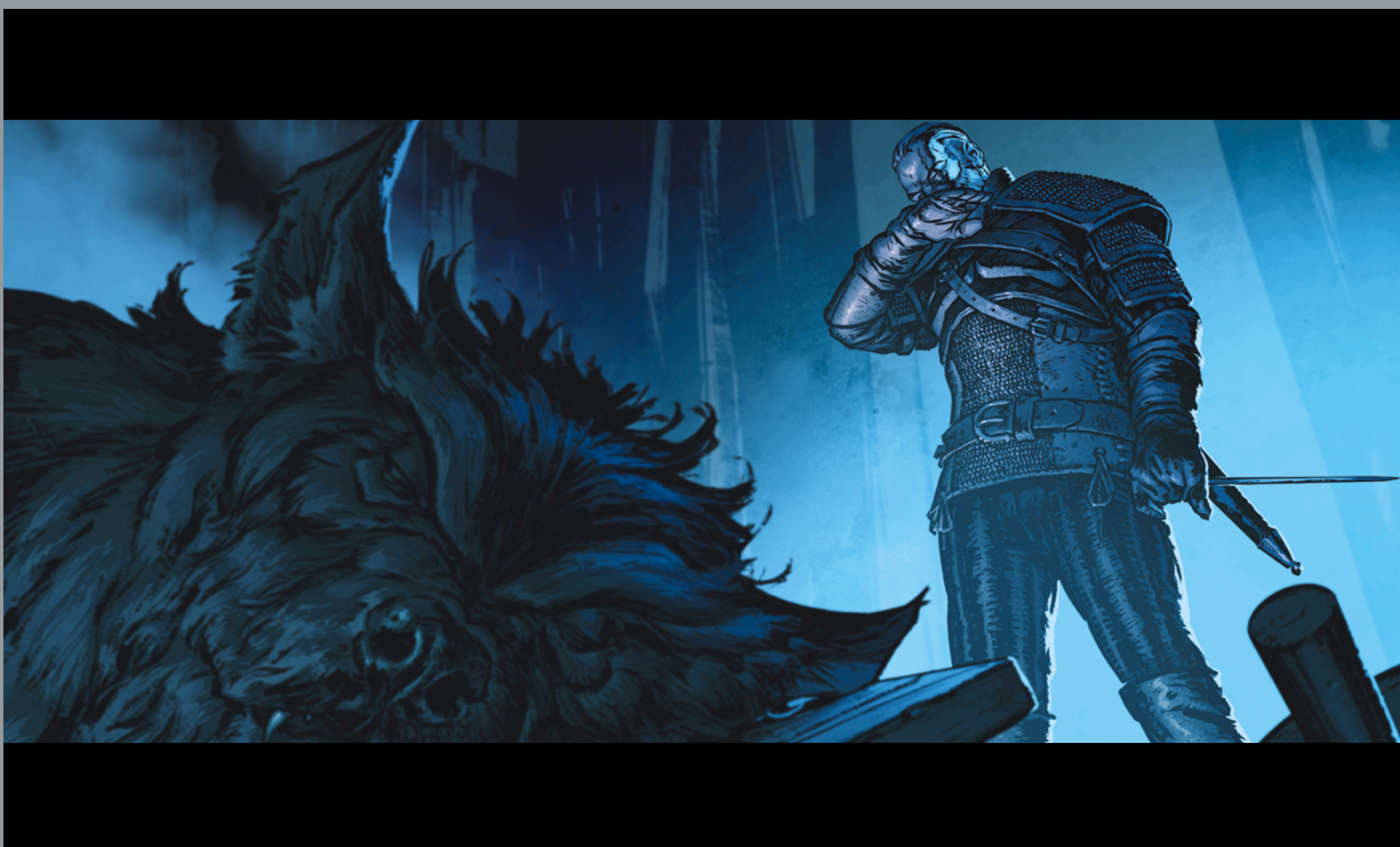
Flashbacks

Our ambition was to create a storyline stretching across all three games that would be consistent, epic, and branching—one that would stick in the collective gaming imagination for the ages. From the very start of the series, a key part in our presentation of major plot points has been the use of flashbacks shown via partly animated, hand-drawn sequences. Their task was to highlight key moments and the effects of the most important decisions our hero makes. The following pages present a few chosen frames from these, depicting crucial moments in the story of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*.





























EPILOGUE

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There is an inner fire in everyone at CD PROJEKT RED. It's fueled by what we surround ourselves with; it's what we play, where we live and who we spend that life with.

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Meet the people behind *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt.*

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